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ABSTRACT

The No Child Left Behind Act leaves no doubt about the importance of effective reading instruction, setting a national goal for every child to become a proficient reader by the third grade. With 70% of fourth graders from low income families currently unable to read at even a basic level, teachers face a daunting challenge. The schools described in this book, like many schools across the country, are creatively addressing this challenge. The book states that they were chosen based on recommendations of early childhood specialists and that in these schools, teachers and administrators, together with students, families, and the larger community, continually examine, reflect on, and change educational and family engagement practices to meet the needs of an increasingly culturally and economically diverse community of students. The following schools are described in the book: Helen Gordon Child Development Center in Portland, Oregon; Whittier Elementary in Pasco, Washington; Cherry Valley Elementary in Polson, Montana; and Tulalip Elementary in Marysville, Washington. The High-Performing Learning Communities (HPLC) Project (2001) has developed a framework of principles that may be helpful when looking at the accomplishments of the schools described in the book, including: shared vision; challenging curriculum and engaged student learning; supportive organizational structures; collaborative learning community; and proactive community relations. Following the school stories, the book offers annotated lists of multicultural Web sites, including children's author sites and children's books and other educational resources for teaching children from specific cultures. (Contains 94 references.) (NKA)

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Sharing the Wisdom of Practice

Schools That Optimize
Literacy Learning
for All Students



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Helps schools identify, interpret, and use data to guide planning and accountability

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SHARING THE WISDOM OF PRACTICE:
SCHOOLS THAT OPTIMIZE
LITERACY LEARNING FOR ALL CHILDREN

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July 2002



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Introduction

American education is learning from its considerable successes and egregious failures to build bridges between students' diverse abilities, language backgrounds and experiences, and common curriculum goals that accomplish academic success for a greater range of students (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

"All children will learn to high standards" is a primary goal of our current school reform movement. But, as achievement gaps among the nation's racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups persist, a central question becomes, "How can we ensure that *each* child has the support he or she needs for healthy development and optimal learning?" The No Child Left Behind Act leaves no doubt about the importance of effective reading instruction, setting a national goal for every child to become a proficient reader by the third grade. With 70 percent of fourth-graders from low-income families currently unable to read at even a basic level, teachers face a daunting challenge (Boss, 2002).

The schools described in this book, like many schools across the country, are creatively addressing this challenge. They were chosen based on recommendations of early childhood specialists at state departments of education, and other educators in the region. The schools

are not perfect in every way. Rather, teachers and administrators, together with students, families, and the larger community, continually examine, reflect on, and change educational and family engagement practices to meet the needs of an increasingly culturally and economically diverse community of students. In turn, they are learning more about themselves as teachers and learners, their students and families, and the communities in which they live.

Grover J. Whitehurst, Assistant Secretary, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, advises that educators should be moving toward Evidence-Based Education—"the integration of professional wisdom (which includes personal experience and consensus views) with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction." He cites two kinds of empirical evidence: scientifically based research and objective measures, such as benchmarks and local data (2002). The schools profiled here base their instructional practices on inquiry into relevant research, as well as study and reflection on their own practices and experience. All schools have made substantial progress in helping children learn to high standards, particularly in the crucial area of language and literacy.

In a previous NWREL publication, *Many Paths to Literacy: Language, Literacy, and Learning in the Primary Classroom* (Novick, 2002), we used vignettes from these schools to illustrate language and literacy practices that lead to high levels of achievement, and motivate children

**"Language is
inextricably
linked to
culture."**

to be lifelong readers and writers. In this book, we take a more indepth look at the schools—their beliefs and practices. While academic achievement is at the center of their efforts, the stories of these schools reflect the critical importance of creating a collaborative

learning community based on caring and support, high expectations (with the resources to meet them), and multiple opportunities for meaningful participation. Together, these characteristics support high levels of achievement and resiliency for all (Benard, 1993).

Interviews with teachers, parents, and students, document study, and classroom observations have been used to gather information on the challenges faced and successes achieved by the preschool and elementary schools described here:

Helen Gordon Child Development Center in Portland, Oregon, has created an environment that is similar to the homes of children who seem to learn to read, in researcher G. Reid Lyon's words, "as if by magic." Storytelling, story reading, story acting, songs, poetry, painting, and, most of all, attentive adults who listen carefully to children (often writing down children's dictated words, just as they are spoken) help all children build a strong foundation in oral language, critical for literacy development. A culturally responsive, family-like atmosphere ensures that all children see themselves and

their families reflected in the classroom environment. According to children's author and educator Mem Fox, three ingredients are essential for early literacy development: the magic of language, the magic of print, and the magic of background knowledge. At Helen Gordon, teachers engage children in all three types of magic.

Based on a broadened conception of giftedness, the Renzulli enrichment model implemented at **Whittier Elementary** in Pasco, Washington, helps teachers provide opportunities for success through multiple pathways for their predominantly Mexican American students. Activities that appeal to multiple intelligences—music, arts and crafts, dance, auto mechanics, sewing, chess, basketball, cooking—support the development of higher-order thinking skills and engage even the most discouraged learners. And everyone is excited that for the first time in 30 years, they have a school on the east side of town: "A walking school," as Principal Jackie Ramirez describes it, "where our teachers are part of the community, part of kids' lives every day." Individualized instruction, partnerships with families, and a late-exit bilingual program have resulted in children's increased proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking in both Spanish and English, and a sense of belonging to a supportive learning community.

Located on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Polson, Montana, **Cherry Valley Elementary** carries its program into the community at large by inviting other helping agencies, including Salish and Kootenai tribal members, to work along with educators and families to create a truly expanded learning community. Ongoing, inquiry-based professional development encourages teachers to examine their teaching practices, research-based strategies, and their own personal values in order to provide a school environment that reduces cultural discontinu-



ities and builds on the strengths of all children. A comprehensive literacy program that provides many enjoyable and intellectually challenging activities actively engages children and their families in reading and writing for authentic purposes. In 2002, Cherry Valley was named Montana's Title I Distinguished School, in recognition of its exemplary practices. The achievement gap between Native American and non-Native children continues to close, as children experience the joy of literacy in their everyday lives.

Tulalip Elementary in Marysville, Washington, works in partnership with the Tulalip Tribes to revitalize a Native language by incorporating it into the curriculum. Teachers recognize the unique cultural perspectives about literacy that their Native American students bring to the classroom. These perspectives are used both to affirm students' knowledge and background, and as a basis for an understanding of the values and skills required by the dominant culture. The use of Native language, culture, and stories in classroom projects and curriculum has resulted in motivated, hard-working students with better grades and behavior. Relationships between the community and

the school have improved as the school continues to communicate with the tribe about the appropriate ways to promote the Native language and culture.

High-Performing Learning Communities

The High-Performing Learning Communities (HPLC) Project (Berman, Chambliss, & Wood, 2001) has developed a framework of principles that may be helpful as we look at the accomplishments of the schools described in the following pages. Briefly, the principles include:

Shared Vision: In high-performing and equitable (HPE) schools, members of the school community share a vision of high expectations for all students, rooted in a set of core beliefs about how all students learn to high standards and about how the school promotes student success.

Challenging Curriculum and Engaged Student Learning: HPE schools challenge all students to learn. They create curriculum and use a variety of instructional strategies that promote student mastery of the higher-order skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to be successful.

Supportive Organizational Structures: HPE schools organize students and structure time and resources to optimize the learning of students, adults in the school, and community members.

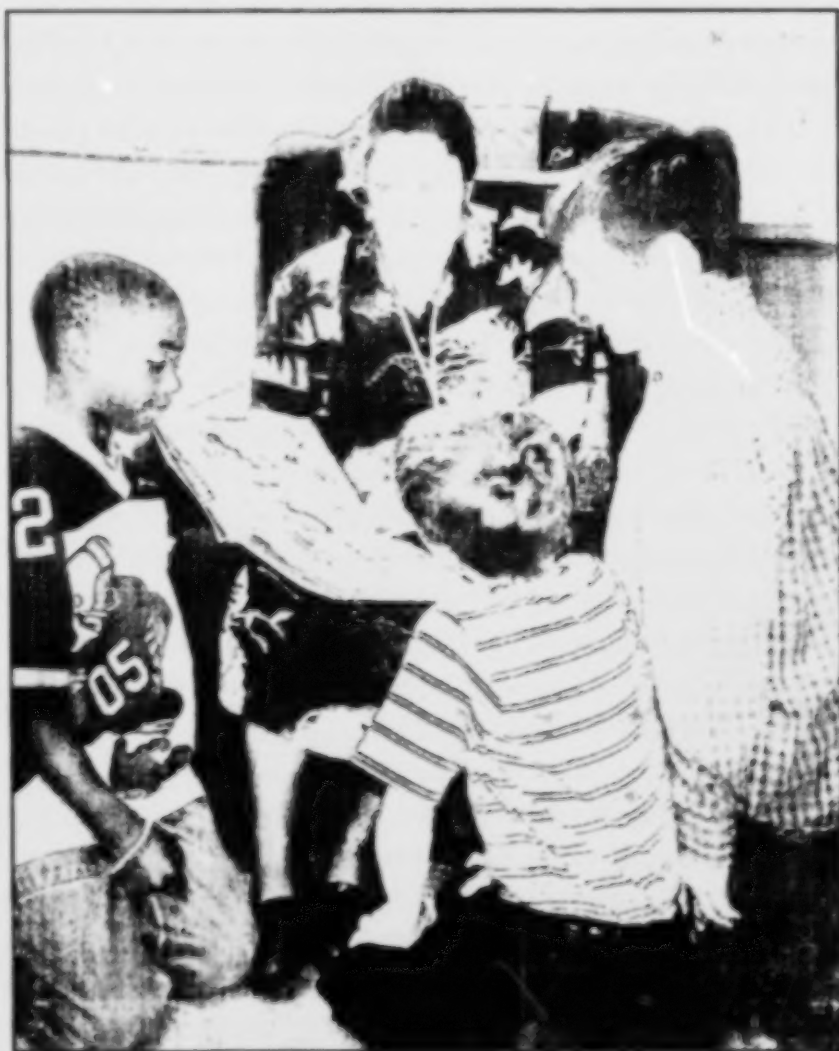
Collaborative Learning Community: HPE schools have a culture of learning in which all members of the school community (faculty, staff, parents, community, and students) continuously learn and change, as part of taking collective responsibility for improving student achievement.

Proactive Community Relations: HPE schools actively engage parent and community members in shaping their students' education and build enduring partnerships with the community, external partners, and the school board/district. HPE schools function as a school resource and work to strengthen the communities they serve.

All of these principles speak to the complexity of learning and the level of challenge and opportunity experienced by diverse populations of students. Our understanding of learning and its varying expressions—particularly in the area of language and literacy—is determined largely by our cultural experiences. "Language," writes Nieto (1996) "is inextricably linked to culture. It is a primary means by which people express their cultural values and the lens through which they view the world." The HPLC principles can only be implemented in the context of the local community culture—not in any standardized process. "None of us is to be found in sets of tasks or lists of attributes; we can be known only in the unfolding of our unique stories within the context of everyday events," reminds author and educator Vivian Paley (1990).

Using Research To Inform Practice and Practice To Inform Research

There is a growing consensus that reading is a process in which the reader constructs meaning from print—an active, problem-solving, thinking process that is influenced by the reader's prior knowledge and experience (National Reading Panel, 2000). This cognitive conceptualization of reading for understanding implies that we should cast a wide, cross-disciplinary net to capture the knowledge about how chil-



dren learn to be thoughtful, engaged readers and writers. The RAND report by the RAND Reading Study Group on reading comprehension (Snow, 2002), chaired by Catherine Snow, advocates for a wide range of relevant research to inform comprehension instruction:

- Qualitative and quantitative studies
- Relevant research from a variety of disciplines (linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse processing, anthropology, psychology, cognitive psychology, cognitive science)
- Mechanisms for distinguishing excellent from mediocre practice, for reviewing and accumulating the knowledge of effective practitioners, and for incorporating practitioner expertise into the research process (p. 66)

We believe that these suggestions apply to all areas of teaching and learning. A major goal of this monograph is to honor the practitioner's wisdom, experience, and voice. The RAND Reading Study Group concluded that, "reflective practitioners constitute a source of knowl-

edge that is insufficiently represented in journals or in research proposals" (2002, p. 66). Knowledgeable teachers who care deeply about their students and their families are at the heart of educational reform that results in high levels of learning for all. According to Cherry Valley Principal Elaine Meeks, "creating a positive school environment, as seen through the eyes of each child, is essential to convey the school's overriding belief: every child counts." This philosophy is put into practice at each of these schools.

Following the school stories are annotated lists of multicultural Web sites that offer valuable information for teachers in our increasingly diverse society. Sites include children's author Web sites, award-winning books, general multicultural sites, and children's books and other educational resources for teaching children from specific cultures.

Helen Gordon Child Development Center: Doing Things With Words in the Real World

One day there was a sunshine. And the sunshine was unhappy. And why? Because no other suns didn't want to play with him and the sunshine said, "And I don't want to play with the other sunshines either." And she went to play with the sunshine.

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Emily, and it was a sad time for her because she fell down at school. Her mother and father were not at home and they never came to pick her up.

I'm so mad at Kagan. If you be in front of me, I'll be in front of you. I didn't like it when Kagan sat in front of me. I was there first. I was there before you.

The study of literacy from the child's point of view has highlighted the role that language plays in the everyday lives of children. Young children, it is clear, learn what language is through what language does. At Helen Gordon Child Development Center in Portland, Oregon, children are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings verbally and in writ-

ing—in letters to friends and parents, in poems, and in stories. Supported by teachers who write children's dictated words just as they are spoken, children write about rejection, fears of abandonment, and injustice, illustrated by the stories above. As Steve Franzel, a teacher of three- through five-year-olds, explains, "Language becomes a way to support children's power—their ability to deal with a peer, with conflict, with sad or scary feelings. Words empower them to express themselves—to handle life."



During the last 20 years, we have learned a great deal about how children learn to read and write by studying the literacy development of children who come from homes with rich oral and written language environments. In such

homes, children's efforts at storytelling, reading, and writing are accepted with interest and enthusiasm and enhanced by adult questions and encouragement. Songs, nursery rhymes, and other forms of word play build phonemic awareness (the ability to hear the separate sounds in words) and encourage the creative use of

"Language becomes a way to support children's power—their ability to deal with a peer, with conflict, with sad or scary feelings. Words empower them to express themselves—to handle life."

language. When adults and older siblings read to themselves and out loud to infants and children, they demonstrate the importance of literacy, as well as its enjoyment (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Kontos, 1986; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Strickland, 1990).

Creating a Supportive Literacy Environment

Teachers at Helen Gordon have created an environment similar to the homes of children who seem to learn to read "naturally." Child-centered conversations, singing, poetry, pretend play, painting and drawing, storytelling and writing, story dramatization, a print-rich environment, and reading stories provide the experiences that the children need to develop their

imaginations, concept knowledge, vocabulary, a narrative voice, and a love of language. At the same time, these activities help children develop their letter-sound knowledge and begin to understand its use in reading and writing.

Built in 1928 by the Fruit and Flower Mission for children's programs, the brick building's large, comfortable rooms, filled with rocking chairs, couches, and braided rugs, create a welcoming atmosphere. Family groupings (multiage groups of two- and three-year-olds and three- to five-year-olds) add to the home-like feeling. As a visitor ascends the large, open stairway leading to the upstairs preschool classrooms, she finds illustrated messages lining the walls that leave little doubt as to the universal nature of the deep concerns of childhood identified by teacher and author Vivian Paley (1990): friendship, security, and fairness. Children also use writing as occasions to play with words, as in this poem that appears to celebrate a ubiquitous childhood food:

I love my putty daddy.
I love my mommy and daddy.
I love my peanut butter daddy. I have a haircut.
I have a balloon up my nose. A peanut butter crayon
up my nose.
A peanut butter me. I have a crayon up my nose.
I want a Disneyland ride now.
Mickey Mouse I love.

A song of woe may turn into an alphabet song and an occasion to practice writing letters:

My head hurts and my neck hurts and I want
my Mama. Steve's a big old pig. Hair-do Mama.
And somebody ripped my crown. Jingle, jingle,
hymer. Jingle, jingle ban bee. ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ—Next time won't
you sing with me?

According to researcher Penelope Engel (1997), "storytelling is perhaps the most powerful way

that human beings organize experience" and the "single strongest predictor of literacy" (p. 3):

Storytelling is an essential, perhaps the essential activity of human beings. It serves a myriad of functions for the young child. Stories allow children to learn about their culture, but also serve as a kind of passport into the culture. Children tell stories as a way of solving emotional, cognitive, and social puzzles and to sort out problems or concerns. Perhaps most importantly, stories are one of the fundamental ways in which we each create an extended self. The developing child's cumulative repertoire of stories gives him or her a sense of self across time and situation (Engel, 1997, p. 8).

At Helen Gordon, children's stories, poems, and letters are displayed in classrooms and hallways, and kept in laminated books, which the children read to themselves and with each other. Many of the four- and five-year-olds recognize their classmates' entries, and have memorized them almost verbatim. Children often read their own messages to themselves after they are written, matching print to their remembered words. Several studies have found that children comprehend and make inferences better when reading child-authored texts than when reading other texts (Sampson, 1997). At Helen Gordon the primary purpose of writing is to identify and express thoughts and feelings. Franzel explains:

I usually use writing as a means to a goal, to validate children's feelings about separation, to help resolve conflict—as crisis prevention. I hear someone screaming and I go over to help them use their words to express their needs and feelings. Then I ask the child, "Do you want to write it down, write a letter?"

The process is such an integral part of the day's activities that the children explain it to new adults in the classroom and expect them to take dictation, just as they might expect adults to tie their shoes. In the approach used at Helen Gordon, often referred to as language experience, teachers act as scribes, writing children's words as they dictate them, listening carefully for the narrative thread, and helping children clarify their thoughts.

Nurturing Emotional Literacy Through Language Experience

Language experience activities integrate all aspects of literacy: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, and are particularly effective for children learning English as a second language.

When adults write down children's stories as children tell them, children learn that:

- What I *think* I can say and discuss with others
- What I *say* can be written and shared with others



- What I *write* can be read by myself and others
- What we *read* can be thought about, shared, and discussed (Nelson & Linek, 1999)

Frequently throughout the day, children use dictating and writing messages, poems, and stories to sort out their feelings and at times to come to terms with their own behavior. For example, the following letter was written after four-year-old Tony watched his classmate leave for the doctor to have stitches in his forehead, following an altercation involving a broom. As Tony thought about what to write to Mark, anger was replaced by a sense of responsibility:

I'm sorry Mark. I hit you with the broom. Why did you want to take my broom? I was just about to color with the chalk and you were trying to take my broom. I was coloring in 5 seconds. I wanted to give him a hug before he left.

Four-year-old Heidi expressed her complex thoughts on friendship and rejection in a prose poem written about and to her friend Olivia:

Olivia is a good friend.
Sometimes she doesn't play with me.
Today she said, "Don't follow me."
I was upset.
Then I was angry.
Then I said, "Bad Olivia."
Then I walked away.
Just like Olivia

Read this note and then you will
Find out about me
And your friend Heidi.
Love, Heidi
To Olivia

Resolving conflict through negotiation and problem solving, and learning to imagine how others think and feel, are critical competencies for all adults. Helping children to understand

and assume responsibility for their behavior is at the center of this preschool curriculum. In turn, teachers are responsible for providing a "secure and loving" environment that fosters connections among staff, children, and families. As Amy Jacobson puts it, "the first thing is for children to feel valued, important, and loved."

Many of Helen Gordon's children spend more than 40 hours a week at the child development center; for such children, separating from parents may be a daily challenge. A number of strategies are used to ease the transition from home to the classroom. On the balcony adjacent to the classrooms, children have the opportunity to wave a last goodbye to a departing parent. For many children, explains Jacobson, "the transition from home to school is not complete until they are taken outside and they see Mom or Dad wave the last time from the sidewalk. Then they can say, 'Okay, they're gone.' In their minds, the transition has been made."

Feeling sad about separating from parents is a frequent topic of conversation among children. Teachers encourage children to write notes to their parents, an activity that has been part of the day at Helen Gordon for many years (see sidebar on Page 11). According to Director Ellie Nolan, "It's been a really nice way for us to help children to have a place to put their feelings." Jacobson agrees:

We help children learn that words have meaning and can be used to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas both verbally and on paper. A lot of times children have trouble separating from their parents, feeling very sad. We help them write a letter, to express their feelings: "I miss my Mommy, I want my Mommy." We write their words exactly as they say them. If they say, "I hurt my knee," that's what we write. That's a validation of their feelings, their ideas.

It also helps them to connect the feelings they had in the morning when they said goodbye with how they feel at the end of the day. They can see, "Oh, yeah, I wrote that to you this morning, but then I did all these other things." And the child can see that they were able to part with the sad feelings and get past it.

Letters to Parents

These are some of the letters that children write to their parents:

I miss Mama
and I wish I couldn't be at school.
And I want to go trick-or-treat.
And I love Mommy.
And I want to go with my Papa to
buy toys for me.
I want my Mama to be a teacher.
And naptime, I don't, I'm not sleepy.
I feel like I want to be a princess.
Right now
I'm done.

Once upon a time there was an old fire truck.
I want my daddy
now, now, now, now, now now!
And I want my daddy now, now, now, now,
now, now, noooow, noooow!

A Family-Like Atmosphere

As Portland State University's laboratory school, Helen Gordon enjoys the participation of university students and practicum students, who supplement the already low child-teacher ratios. The home-like setting, the developmentally appropriate curriculum, and low student-teacher ratios combine to create an unhurried atmosphere—where children's sense of time and concerns are at the center. Comfortable

furniture and ample space provide cozy nooks and crannies where children can curl up with a book, a stuffed animal, and an occasional thumb—a necessity for children who may spend nine hours a day at the center.

Just as parents might at home, teachers use daily routines as occasions for unhurried, child-centered conversations—about a recent field trip or other memorable school activity, a new baby, or a visiting grandparent. Such conversations play a crucial role in the development of oral language, which researchers agree is the cornerstone of written language and strongly correlated with later reading proficiency (Cambourne, 1995; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Schickedanz, 1999; Strickland, 1990). In studies of child care, the amount and quality of verbal interaction engaged in by caregivers and children emerged as the strongest predictor of positive child outcomes (Phillips, 1987).

At the same time, these conversations create shared memories and a sense of community, helping to bridge home and school. Families are included in literacy activities in a number of ways: children's letters to parents, a family bulletin board that features a different family each week, a lending library, and journal writing. Every Friday, three stuffed bunnies—Nickey, Humpty Dumpling, and Rosy—go home with children, and children and parents draw pictures and write about the bunnies' experiences in their homes in a shared journal.

Culturally responsive teaching. In their efforts to ensure that "every child and family feel welcomed by the program," staff draw on the antibias curriculum developed by Louise Derman-Sparks and her colleagues at Pacific Oaks College (1989). The parent handbook explains, "We continually strive to provide materials, activities, and an environment that reflect a respect for, and celebration of, diversi-

ty in race and ethnicity, physical appearance and ability, and family composition and lifestyle." A wide variety of multicultural and bias-free books, dolls, and learning activities ensure that all children see themselves and their families reflected in the classroom environment. "Children need to know that they can choose a book and find themselves in it," notes Jacobson.

Families are invited to share aspects of their culture in the classroom and to share pictures, photographs, and stories on the family bulletin boards. Labels of classroom areas and objects are written in many of the languages that are represented in the culturally diverse classrooms—Farsi, Bulgarian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Chinese—adding to the print-rich and culturally responsive environment.

A Mix of Planned and Child-Initiated Activities

Linking art, poetry, and storytelling. While teachers encourage spontaneous conversation and story dictation, they also provide opportunities to write using teacher-suggested themes, and encourage children to illustrate their stories. "Story starters" are often used to help children begin a story. Teachers have found that writing in response to a picture fosters the creative use of language, aesthetic sensitivity, and abstract thinking. Research has shown that the propensity to create vivid images during reading correlates highly with overall comprehension (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

At Helen Gordon, teachers spread pictures out on a table and children choose a picture that is interesting to them. Children are asked to "think about the picture and dictate a story, poem, or impression." "Just to be able to think of a story is extremely abstract—to look at a

picture of an animal or person and think of something that could be happening and build on it," Jacobson explains. In this response to a picture, Justin moves from description to fantasy:

The mountain is wonderful. I like it a lot. I like people climbing on it. Sometimes I like to climb down the mountain and swim in the water. That's a sun shadow on the picture. It looks like a rock in the water. I see cracks on land. I see bushes in the back. I think I would like to see a seagull. I want to ride on a whale's back.

The many opportunities provided at Helen Gordon to read and write stories and poetry and to sing songs enhance children's natural ability to attune to rhyming patterns, cadences, sounds, and metaphoric imagery. Engel (1997) and Bearse (1992) found that children frequently incorporate the styles used by the authors of stories and poems they listen to and read. Inspired by poems read to her by her grandfather and in her classroom, a four-year-old wrote a poem in this response to a picture of a forest scene. She entitled it "Green":

Birds are colorful.
The rainbow that's not there.
Why do I wonder "why" everyday?
Because I can't remember why.
Birds like rainbows — flutter in the sky.
But where is the rainbow?

Linking storytelling and pretend play.

Research has demonstrated a strong link between dramatic play and print knowledge, emergent story reading, and story recall (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Rowe, 1998). Many children make up their first stories in the context of pretend play—creating and enacting their own dramatic narratives—and researchers agree that dramatizing stories can help link children's love of pretend play to more formal storytelling (McLane & McNamee, 1991; Paley, 1990).

Teachers at Helen Gordon help children connect dramatic play to stories by encouraging children to act out favorites, such as *The Carrot Seed*, *The Paper Bag Princess*, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. The enactments range from impromptu performances within their own classrooms to more formal presentations for families and other classrooms.

Children also spontaneously act out stories, both their own and the stories that are read to them. In these dramatizations, they change rapidly from mothers, fathers, and babies to ballet dancers, butterflies, prisoners, princesses, pirates, and superheroes. At other times, they may follow a plot from a story; one child turns the pages of a book, while others create

makeshift costumes and act out the parts. A performance of the *Nutcracker* ballet viewed by a child at Christmas inspired dances and dramatic play for months afterward.

Based on 80 reports examined by Harvard's Project Zero, a causal link was found between classroom drama (enacting texts) and a variety of verbal areas. The researchers reported that:

Drama not only helped children's verbal skills with respect to the texts enacted; it also helped children's verbal skills when applied to new, non-enacted texts. Thus, drama helps children build verbal skills that transfer to new materials. Such an effect has great value for education: verbal skill is highly valued, adding such drama techniques

costs little in terms of effort or expense, and a high proportion of children are influenced by such curricular changes (Winner & Hetland, 2000, p. 4).



Keeping track of literacy development. Samples of children's writing and drawing kept in portfolios provide documentation of progress to share with children and families. Because teachers, in director Ellie Nolan's words, "know kids and know what they need," anecdotal records that accompany the work samples add context and detail to the picture of a child's literacy development. For example, teachers record the move from understanding that a symbol (e.g., a tree) can stand for their name on their cubby to understanding that letters are symbols that represent the spoken word.



Opportunities To Read, Read, Read

Researchers have found that listening to stories in the context of a pleasurable, social interaction:

- Builds vocabulary and concept knowledge
- Aids development of sophisticated language structures
- Enhances comprehension, memory, imagination, attention span, and listening skills
- Helps children think in more complex, abstract, and creative ways
- Broadens children's range of experience
- Helps children learn the structure as well as the linguistic features of stories or narrative text

- Enhances print knowledge and decoding ability
- Helps children develop a love of reading
- Aids the development of phonemic awareness through rhyme and alliteration (Chomsky, 1972; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Purcell-Gates, 1988; Schickedanz, 1999; Wells, 1986).

Helen Gordon's bookshelves and supply closets spill over with hundreds of inviting titles. Teachers frequently visit the local libraries, bringing as many as 50 books to the classrooms every few weeks. Books chosen for the classrooms are visually engaging and rich with expressive language; those that become favorites are purchased for the classroom.

Reading beautiful books to and with preschool and primary-age children develops a deep and abiding love of stories and books. Long before children can read proficiently, they can comprehend texts that are far above their independent reading level. Listening to stories at a level that is more advanced than a child's independent reading level builds listening and comprehension skills and encourages engagement in reading.

Eric Carle, Maurice Sendak, and Leo Lionni are favorites, but when issues important for children need to be addressed, stories that touch those issues are found—stories about getting lost, making a mess, a new sibling, breaking something, or the death of a grandparent. Rich discussions help children connect their experiences with the stories and to understand the texts on deeper and deeper levels. For example, Nancy Carlson's *Arnie and the Stolen Markers* inspired one child to write a story about her own experience with stealing a toy. Parents can check out these books from the school lending library to read at home with their children.

Reading stories occurs many times a day—at opening circle, before naps, at the end of the day, and just about any time a child requests a story. When three-year-old Amanda announced that she was going in from outside-play to hear a story, a visitor asked who would read it to her. "Why, anyone I ask, of course," came the indignant reply. Favorite books are read many times and children frequently read the memorized books to themselves, to parents, to stuffed animals, and to each other.

Chapter books for young readers. Chapter books, such as *Stuart Little*, *Charlotte's Web*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, help children calm down for naptime. "It's surprising how even the youngest children listen well and remember a long, complicated story," notes Laura West, a teacher of three- to five-year-olds.

West's observation reflects what the makers of the popular children's television show, "Sesame Street," have recently discovered. "Children are able to understand a well-structured story a lot better than we believed they could in the late 1960s," says Daniel Anderson, a psychology professor at the University of Massachusetts, who has been a consultant to "Sesame Street." While their trademark format, developed in the 1960s, featured 20 to 40 short segments an hour, the show's producers have found that interrupting Big Bird's stories actually "confused and annoyed children." With their new format, instead of dispersing one story throughout the hour, broken up by numerous unrelated sequences, stories are kept intact, with an uninterrupted beginning, middle, and end (Salamon, 2002).

Predictable Books

Predictable books that offer opportunities for children to chime in on the refrains are popular, and the familiarity of the words helps draw children's attention to print.

Researchers increasingly consider storybook reading by children who are not yet reading an important part of literacy development (Hiebert, 1997;

MacGillivray, 1997; Sulzby, 1985). Long before they can actually read print, children often "read" the illustrations of a book or a memorized rhyme, song, or story to themselves, parents, friends, pets, and stuffed animals. These reenactments model the adult's storybook reading and draw their attention to print. Hiebert observes, "When the information at the word level is not yet available to children, their text expectations draw their attention to individual words and support the development of an ever-expanding reading vocabulary" (1997, p. 3).

Through repeated readings and with the help of illustrations and their growing understanding that print makes sense, children develop their storybook reading ability. Children who learn to read without formal instruction have often been described as teaching themselves to read from reading and rereading favorite storybooks (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). The National Reading Panel concluded that repeated reading procedures that offer guidance and feedback are effective for improving word recognition, fluency, comprehension, and overall reading achievement through grade five (2000).

Helen Gordon's bookshelves and supply closets spill over with hundreds of inviting titles.

By reading and rereading favorite storybooks, songs, nursery rhymes and other poetry, and their own poems, stories, and letters, many of Helen Gordon's children are well on their way to cracking the sound-to-print code by the time they leave for elementary school. Most children also have mastered the skills commonly known

as reading readiness: phonological awareness; knowledge of colors and shapes; familiarity with the alphabet; the ability to read a few common words, signs, and labels, and to write a few letters. But children at Helen Gordon, like many children who experience supportive literacy environments in the preschool years,

Predictable Books

Books with predictable patterns encourage children to predict and remember parts of the text. Both illustrations and predictable patterns (refrains, rhyme, rhythm, and repetition) provide scaffolds for young readers' word identification, and allow children to recognize whole-language sequences. When children can chime in with "Run, run, as fast as you can" or "And Pierre said, 'I don't care,'" they learn to associate written words with the oral words they recite from memory.

Popular books with predictable patterns include:

- Brown, M. W. (1947). *Goodnight moon*. New York: Scholastic.
- Carle, E. (1969). *The very hungry caterpillar*. Cleveland: Collins-World.
- Carle, E. (1977). *The grouchy ladybug*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Carle, E. (1984). *The very busy spider*. New York: Philomel.
- Carle, E. (1987). *A house for a hermit crab*. Saxonville, MA: Picture Book Studio.
- Carle, E. (1990). *The very quiet cricket*. New York: Philomel.
- Galdone, P. (1975). *The gingerbread boy*. New York: Seabury.
- Guarino, D. (1989). *Is your mama a llama?* New York: Scholastic.
- Lowrey, J. S. (1970). *The poky little puppy*. New York: Golden Books.
- Martin, B. Jr. (1983). *Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Martin, B. Jr. (1992). *Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear?* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Numeroff, L. J. (1985). *If you give a mouse a cookie*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Peek, M. (1981). *Mary wore her red dress*. New York: Clarion.
- Rosen, M. (1989). *We're going on a bear hunt*. New York: Macmillan.
- Rylant, C. (1982). *When I was young in the mountains*. New York: Dutton's Children's Books.
- Sendak, M. (1990). *Pierre: A cautionary tale in five chapters and a prologue*. New York: Harper Trophy.
- Sendak, M. (1990). *Chicken soup with rice: A book of months*. New York: Harper Trophy.
- Wood, A. (1984). *The napping house*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.



know far more about literacy than these popular benchmarks would indicate. With a familiarity with and love of stories and books, and a penchant for singing, pretend play, and poetic images, these preschoolers are well on their way to becoming confident readers and writers.

Conclusion

A number of researchers have concluded that the most important foundation for literacy in the preschool years is oral language (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1995, 1999; McCabe & Dickinson, 2001). Engaging in extended conversations with responsive adults, story reading, and storytelling offer rich opportunities for children to develop vocabulary, conceptual knowledge, and their narrative

voice. According to Feagans and Appelbaum (1986), "narrative ability is the single most important language ability for success in school" (p. 359).

At Helen Gordon, teachers understand that by integrating literacy—oral, written, emotional, and aesthetic—into the everyday lives of young children, literacy becomes meaningful, relevant, and powerful. As Hiebert (1997) writes, "The debate regarding early literacy experiences should not be conceptualized as 'either literacy or no literacy.' The critical issue is, What types of literacy experiences are appropriate for young children?" (p. 199).

Tying literacy to emotional development through reading and discussing stories about such themes as intergenerational relationships,

courage, friendship, overcoming adversity, prejudice, grief, rejection, and loneliness helps children develop an understanding of their own and others' feelings. At the same time, engaging in rich discussions about high-quality literature develops oral language and high-level comprehension and interpretive skills. When schools and families provide opportunities for children to express their thoughts and feelings verbally and in writing, to read and discuss stories that offer rich opportunities to discuss emotions, and to understand how others think and feel, emotional development and literacy go hand in hand.

At Helen Gordon, the faculty has created an environment similar to the homes of children who learn to read "as if by magic." Author and educator Mem Fox's three types of magic required for optimal literacy development are developed here—the magic of language, the magic of print, and the magic of background knowledge. Many varied experiences enable children to use all of their senses and intelligences to establish a rich conceptual base—one that allows them to make connections between what they know and understand with knowledge and concepts encountered in new environments. And written language, like oral language, is learned, in Bruner's phrase (1983), by "doing things with words in the real world."



Whittier Elementary: Highlight My Strengths

The challenge and the promise of personal fulfillment, not remediation (under whatever guise), should guide the education of [culturally diverse] students. Remediation defeats, challenge strengthens—affirming their potential, crediting them with their achievements, inspiring them (Steele, 1992).

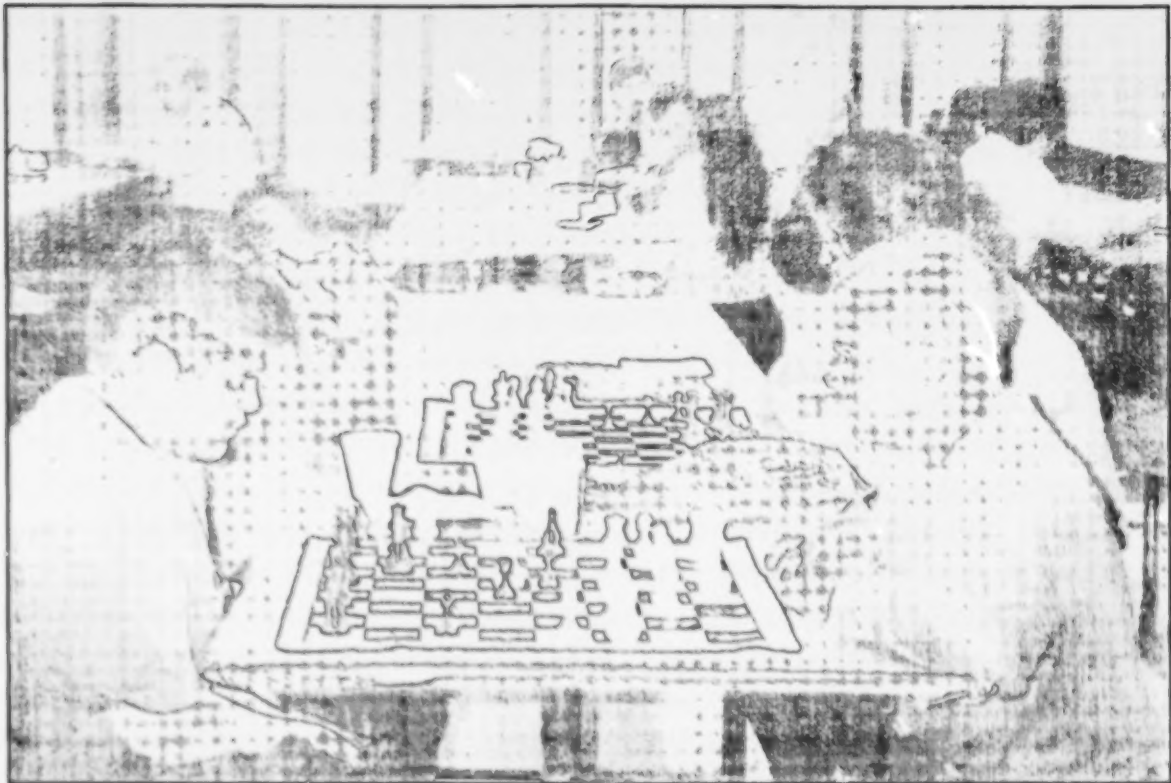
At Whittier Elementary in Pasco, Washington, teachers understand both the strengths and the struggles of their economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse students. They knew the challenges they would be facing when three years ago, they made a personal choice to teach at the brand-new elementary school in the rural town of Pasco. Two-thirds of Whittier's teachers are Spanish/English bilingual, and some have children in the school. Many have had the same experiences that most of their families face—poverty and hard work—often in the fields or shift work in the food-processing plants. And everyone is excited to be teaching in a school that is part of the community: "A walking school," as Principal Jackie Ramirez describes it, "where our teachers are part of the community, part of kids' lives every day."

A large number of the children are from migrant farmworker families, moving from

school to school and from town to town as the crops ripen. But over the years, migrant families have settled in Pasco. Since 1980, when there were only 25 Mexican American children, Pasco has become a predominantly Mexican American community. "We have a very large stable Mexican American community now," says the district's bilingual specialist, Liz Padilla Flynn. "A large migrant population came to pick asparagus, apples, potatoes, cherries. Now there are food-processing plants. Many migrant families settled, and they have increasingly entered mainstream professions, often in the growing number of schools in the area."

With the affordability of manufactured homes, there are a lot of first-time home buyers. "But many are families with two incomes, just trying to make it," says Ramirez. "When you have six people to support on \$12,000 a year, your

**Everyone is
excited to be
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the community.**



resources and time are limited." Approximately 98 percent of the students in this schoolwide Title I school receive free or reduced-price lunch. More than 70 percent of students are learning English as a second language, and approximately 90 percent of Whittier's incoming kindergartners enter school with limited vocabularies and background knowledge relevant to schooling. "Low socioeconomic status means less access, fewer opportunities and experiences," notes Ramirez. "The challenge is not for everyone. What we do is crucial on a daily basis. We cannot have one wasted moment. Teachers are working their hearts out."

The higher risk of reading problems associated with a lack of proficiency in English upon school entry is widely documented. These difficulties are often compounded by poverty, low levels of parental education, lack of access to preschool programs, and poor schooling. Many

immigrants from Latin America have limited formal education because only a fraction of the population of these countries has access to K-12 education (National Task Force on Minority High Achievement, 1999).

Using an Enrichment Model: "What Can We Do Differently?"

It is precisely because of these risks that Whittier's faculty has chosen to use an enrichment model, rather than a remedial model that focuses on low-level skills, for its school reform effort. This model—the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), developed by Joseph Renzulli and Sallie Reis—is based on the premise that true equity is not the product of identical learning experiences for all students.

Rather, equity is the product of a broad range of differentiated learning experiences that take into account each student's abilities, interests, and learning styles. (The SEM is funded by the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Project, and all of Whittier's faculty is trained in the model.)

The faculty is excited about an approach to teaching and learning that builds on the strengths of everyone: children, families, and all staff. Third/fourth-grade teacher Cynthia Chase-Spilman says the decision was simple: "We knew that if we continued to do what a typical school does, we would continue to get what we had been getting, which was failure for the children, so we had to think, 'what can we do differently?'" Ramirez agrees:

The enrichment model makes them look at life differently, see problems differently, and interact with the community in a different way. We look at where kids are, what we have to offer, and what we need to provide for them to be successful—Boy and Girl Scouts, field trips, music, art, dance, auto mechanics. They learn different languages, different ways to express themselves.

Building on and Expanding Children's Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

Before coming to Whittier, Chase-Spilman taught at another innovative elementary school where they helped prepare children for Sheltered English classes by providing opportunities to explore the city through field trips. Every Wednesday they went to the library, a pet shop, a flower shop, or other local site, returning to school to discuss their experience and sometimes to write about it. "We spent the whole day just learning about the world," says Chase-Spilman. (See sidebar for a letter of appreciation from one student on Page 22.)

By providing such rich experiences for learning about the world through exploration, discussion, and writing, teachers help children to build background knowledge, conceptual development, and word knowledge. Researchers have found wide variation in the vocabulary of young children. Whitehurst (2001) concluded that by first grade, linguistically advantaged children are likely to have vocabularies that are four times the size of their linguistically disadvantaged peers.

Becker (1997) concluded that the primary difficulty with sustaining early gains in reading is the lack of adequate vocabulary to meet the broad academic demands that begin in the early upper-elementary grades and continue throughout schooling (cited in Baker, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995). These researchers observed, "One of the most alarming findings is that vocabulary differences between students appear early and the vocabulary gap grows increasingly large over time" (p. 6).

Words and concepts. Templeton and Pikulski (1999) suggest that effective vocabulary instruction develops the relationship between words and concepts:

Concepts are the basic units of thought and belief (Smith, 1995), and words are the labels for these thoughts and beliefs. If a concept is a familiar one, then the word that corresponds to this underlying knowledge will be understood, remembered, and used. Concepts grow and develop through experiences and through examining those experiences, concretely and through reading and writing. This in turn leads to learning and using more labels—words. The strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension exists because students bring this background knowledge, these thoughts and beliefs, to their reading (p. 2).

Whittier's enrichment model engages students in a wide range of meaningful learning experiences. This year, an oral language specialist works with tutors to provide oral language development for children identified with limited oral language. Tutors work with small groups of kindergarten and first-grade children, engaging in extended conversations, reading aloud

and discussing stories, playing with puppets, and using a variety of language experience activities.

At the same time, the knowledge and life experience that all children bring to school is nurtured in a climate of trust and caring. "First the children have to trust you and lose their fear of

Greater Pasco Area Chamber of Commerce

Teacher Appreciation Week — Essay Contest Winner

Honoring Cynthia Chase-Spilman

Fifth-Grade Teacher — Livingston Elementary — Pasco School District #1

Hello, I'm Tony Jimenez and I'd like to tell the Pasco Chamber of Commerce about a special teacher in my life. My special teacher really is a special teacher because she is two teachers in one. I want to tell you about my Prep SET 5th grade teachers... Mrs. Alice Rodriguez and Mrs. Cynthia Chase-Spilman. They are a team. They are always together! Everyday I think of them as just one fantastic person! They have influenced my life so much that I can't believe it!

At the beginning of this year my teachers knew that I was low in all my grades. But they told me that no matter what I did, they would always like me and always help me. I like that promise! They told me I was not going to be just good. I was going to be great. I was going to be smart. I wanted to believe that, and I did!

I learned to organize my school supplies. I put them in a tub or on a shelf just like I'll put them in a locker in middle school. When all my stuff is neat I think I do my work faster. Faster is better!

Sometimes I used to be silly in school because I was confused. I learned my lesson about being respectful and polite. When I'm confused I usually don't act silly anymore. My teachers taught me to be polite to myself. So now I have learned more. I'm happier.

On Wednesdays my class goes on field trips all over town. We've been taking trips to know about different kinds of jobs. On one trip to the Pasco City Hall I got to be the mayor pro-tem of Pasco for awhile. I felt full of joy! So I know my teachers have influenced my life because I want to grow up to have an interesting job. Maybe, if I want to, I'll be mayor of Pasco in some years.

I'll always have my two teachers in my heart. So I know that they will always influence me!

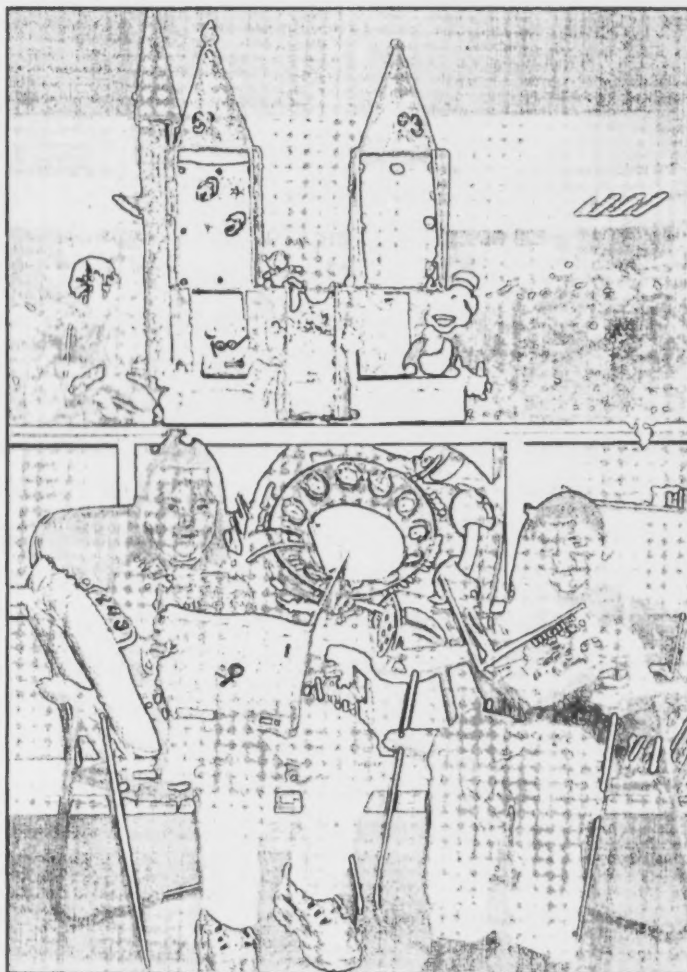
Tony Jimenez
5th Grade Prep SET
Ruth Livingston Elementary
May 6, 1996

failure," Chase-Spilman says. "Once they get the trust, they learn the excitement of learning, the pride in themselves, the dignity of being self-directed. Once these are in place, then learning skyrockets."

Enhancing the curriculum, as well as providing motivation for self-directed learning, are the weekly Enrichment Clusters. Clusters are composed of multiage groups of students who pursue common interests. Every Wednesday morning for an hour, all children enjoy enrichment activities—dance, music, chess, art, and athletics. In addition, three days a week, about 200 children stay after school for tutoring and

enrichment activities. Every teacher and teaching assistant engages in the instruction of these Wednesday morning clusters, and the majority of the faculty also teaches the after-school enrichment/extension opportunities. Enrichment facilitator Debra Bracks-Jones has adopted the SEM Interest Inventory Survey to identify and collect student and teacher "special interests, strong points, and passions."

**"First the children
have to trust you
and lose their fear
of failure."**



Success Through Multiple Pathways

The after-school program also includes volunteers from the community, who offer a wide range of exciting activities. Students' interests are matched with adults who offer their expertise in music, dance, auto mechanics, arts and crafts, basketball, sewing, chess, cooking. "Our principal, Jackie Ramirez, is very open. If I have a love of dancing and want to teach dance, then I teach it," says Rivera. Recently the school purchased 20 guitars. These guitars are the first instruments that the students have attempted to play. Students not only learned to play, but some students also performed, along with fellow students who learned Mexican folk dancing, in a downtown festival. These added experiences don't compete with reading and math; they offer opportunities for success through multiple pathways. Rivera explains:

If a kid needs help in reading, but wants to learn to play guitar, we give him both. We look at the whole child and give him other avenues of involvement with learning. A child might need a lot more than reading at any point. All of our special education kids need enrichment. They often have individual tutoring much of the day. Now they have opportunities to explore other avenues; they have really blossomed. It's worth it for them to stay in school because they see a lot of avenues they can take.

As the enrichment facilitator, Bracks-Jones provides workshops and coaching for teachers in the schoolwide enrichment model (SEM), as well as in the techniques needed to prepare students for the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). She has found that both the SEM and the WASL support the development of higher-order thinking skills, and because the enrichment clusters are

aligned with the Washington performance tasks, "it all fits together; they complement each other—the enrichment model and the Washington learning goals." She continues:

Students need to be able to do more than regurgitate information. They need to be able to apply and use it in novel situations—to apply it to their lives, to improve their lives. It will help them in high school and in college with higher-order thinking, reading, and writing. It will help them as workers, as citizens, and as family members. During the enrichment clusters, we bring in all our talents; we engage in projects with students. We engage in action research projects—graphing, data collection, questioning strategies. We solve problems in the real world.

Last year, during the weekly May sessions, we focused on persuasive writing. In one group of bilingual children in kindergarten through grade

Books About Words for Primary Students

Templeton and Pikulski (1999) stress the importance of fostering a word-learning environment that promotes inquisitiveness, interest, and wordplay. They suggest these books for primary students:

Bunting, J. (1996). *My first action word book*. London: Dorling Kindersley.

Degen, B. (1983). *Jamberry*. New York: Harper & Row.

Ernest, L. C. (1999). *The letters are lost!* New York: Viking.

Farwell, C. (1998). *Word wizard*. New York: Clarion.

Maestro, G. (1989). *Riddle roundup: A wild bunch to beef up your word power*. New York: Clarion.

Merriam, E. (1993). *Quiet, please*. Illustrated by S. Hamanaka. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Most, B. (1991). *A dinosaur named after me*. San Diego: Harcourt.

Most, B. (1994). *Hippopotamus hunt*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Most, B. (1992). *There's an ant in Anthony*. New York: Morrow.

Schneider, R. M. (1995) *Add it, dip it, fix it: a book of verbs*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Ziefert, H. (1997). *Baby buggy, buggy baby. A wordplay flap book*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Source: Templeton, S., & Pikulski, J. J. (1999). *Building the foundations of literacy: The importance of vocabulary and spelling development*. Available online: www.eduplace.com/rdg/hmsv/research

five, helium balloons with messages designed to persuade the person who found the balloon to write back, were sent aloft! We received messages from as far away as Idaho. The kids were amazed!

Whittier's use of an enrichment model is supported by a growing body of research that shows that the failure of typical programs for second-language learners is due to the neglect of students' cognitive development in the first language. A watered-down remedial curriculum and the lowered expectations of teachers have often resulted in former English language learners graduating at the 10th percentile or leaving school without graduating (Collier & Thomas, 1999). "Now we know from the growing research base that educators must address language, cognitive, and academic development equally, through the first and second language, if they are to ensure students' academic success in the second language," say these researchers (p. 2).

A Comprehensive Literacy Program

With the understanding that comprehension is the goal of reading, Whittier has developed a comprehensive literacy program. In addition to six teachers who are trained in Reading Recovery, the faculty has participated in training by New Zealand literacy educator Margaret Mooney. Several experts on discourse patterns have provided expertise on effective bilingual education and speech patterns. These workshops have helped teachers to understand how children's speech patterns influence their thinking. The goal is not to eliminate the tendency of Hispanic children to speak in a nonlinear style; rather, teachers help children become aware of expectations of mainstream culture—especially on standardized tests—to think in linear terms of cause and effect.

Liz Padilla Flynn, the Pasco School District bilingual specialist, points out that teachers need to understand and support children's discourse patterns, while helping them to learn Standard English:

Schools need to understand where kids are coming from. For example, discourse patterns. In my own speech, I don't get right to the point. I go in spirals, and cover a lot of things before I get back to the original question. But on standardized tests, they expect linear thought: 1, 2, 3—get to the conclusion quickly. Hispanic speech patterns are not that way. Asian American and Native American patterns also tend to be more like a spiral; we tend to go round and round until the focus becomes narrower.

We have to start where kids are—then teach students to organize their thoughts orally and in writing. We need to help kids understand that it's OK to speak this way in their homes, but in order to progress in this society, they need to speak Standard English. We need to show kids how to write a formal paper, help them understand the difference between formal and informal dress and voice. There is a big difference between playground and academic English.

A centralized literacy library with leveled books ensures that all children have books to read at their instructional level. In addition to Reading Recovery (an early intervention in literacy for first-grade students) and one-on-one tutoring provided by volunteers, teachers work daily with small groups of children in guided reading groups to ensure that children better comprehend what they are reading.

In guided reading, the teacher works with small groups of children—talking, thinking out loud, and reading through a picture book, often picture by picture. The teacher helps children relate the book to their own experience, offers questions, invites children to ask their own questions, introduces new vocabulary, and

prompts the children to stimulate their interest and understanding. Groups are flexible and change with the developing needs of students. "Your role is one of support: ensuring that the children read with comprehension," explains Mooney (1997).

For 20 minutes each day, older children choose a book from the classroom library or the well-stocked school library for sustained silent reading (SSR). Research has shown that the amount of time children spend actively engaged in reading is strongly correlated with reading achievements (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Stanovich, 1986). Of course, "active engagement" means that students are using a variety of strategies to monitor comprehension. Merely calling the words or gazing at a book while the brain is otherwise engaged does not lead to proficiency in reading!

The National Center for Education Statistics found that "reading for fun" had a positive relationship to performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Researchers found:

If students, however, regard reading only as a school-related activity, as a duty rather than a pleasure, their future prospects for reading to understand themselves and the world are limited. For reading on one's own not only extends comprehension skills, but also enhances the understanding of what happens in life (Donahue, Finnegan, Lutkus, Allen, & Campbell, 2001, p. 54).

These findings may help explain why the National Reading Panel concluded that there is insufficient research to substantiate claims that amounts of independent reading directly cause gains in reading proficiency. However, the panel made it clear that their findings did not negate the positive influence that independent

silent reading may have on reading proficiency. The question for teachers is, "Under what circumstances does independent reading lead to improved fluency, comprehension, and motivation to read?" As Keith Rayner and colleagues observe, "Reading requires practice, and those who excel end up practicing the most" (2002, p. 86).

Braunger and Lewis (1997) summarize the benefits that independent reading may have for actively engaged readers. Independent reading provides opportunities for children to:

- Apply reading strategies independently
- Read for a sustained period of time
- Use strategies in a variety of texts
- Solve words independently while reading texts well within their control
- Develop fluency
- Develop confidence through sustained, successful reading
- Support each other through reading

Having rich conversations about books helps deepen understanding, connect emotions and background knowledge to texts, and integrate higher-order thinking skills into the language arts curriculum. Literature circles, in which study groups read a book together, a little at a time, stopping along the way to discuss what's happening, provide opportunities for older children to discuss literature, sharing ideas and confusions. Literacy expert Regie Routman describes literature circles as "the best way I know to get students excited about literature and talking on a deep and personal level" (2000, p. 171).

Creating Elegant Areas for Reading

At Whittier, reading is not restricted to the classroom. Teachers want children to understand that reading is not just something you do in school. They want to demonstrate that, in Chase-Spilman's words, "Reading is elegant, valuable, respectful, and downright fun!" This year, in order to honor reading, the faculty has created what everyone agrees is an elegant reading room. With the help of the PTA, community members, and the local furniture storeowner, the tiny room at the top of the stairs is designed to resemble a traditional English study.

Furnished with a brand new couch, oak end tables, a dictionary on a dictionary stand, quilted murals donated by a retired teacher, plants, statues of fairies reading, and, of course, bookshelves filled with the most beautiful picture books, the room belongs to the children. No adults are allowed unless they are a guest of the

child or a celebrity (e.g., the mayor, a pastor, a family member), invited to read aloud to children who have earned the privilege of being in the room. Children earn that right through a variety of ways; all are related to showing growth in reading and writing. For example, a kindergartner might show her teacher that she can sing the alphabet song; a second-grader might read a targeted number of books.

Because of the room's popularity, children have to sign up weeks in advance. Once there, they can read alone, or invite up to four guests to engage in a reader's theater or puppet shows, or read a book aloud. Although they are unsupervised, all students understand that this is a special room, where feet don't go

**"Reading is elegant,
valuable, respectful,
and downright fun!"**



on furniture, and books are treated gently and with respect. The honor system has worked; not one thing has been damaged, says Chase-Spilman. In addition to the elegant reading room, children enjoy book beach parties in the library, complete with brightly colored lounge chairs (donated by community members) and a sandcastle made of boxes and birdseed.

Outdoor reading. For children who just can't put the book down when it's time for recess, there is a shaded area with tables and chairs on the playground. In the summer, umbrellas shield children from the hot Pasco sun. "None of our kids has transportation to get to the city's only library on the other side of town, so we developed a summer reading program in our own library," explains Chase-Spilman.



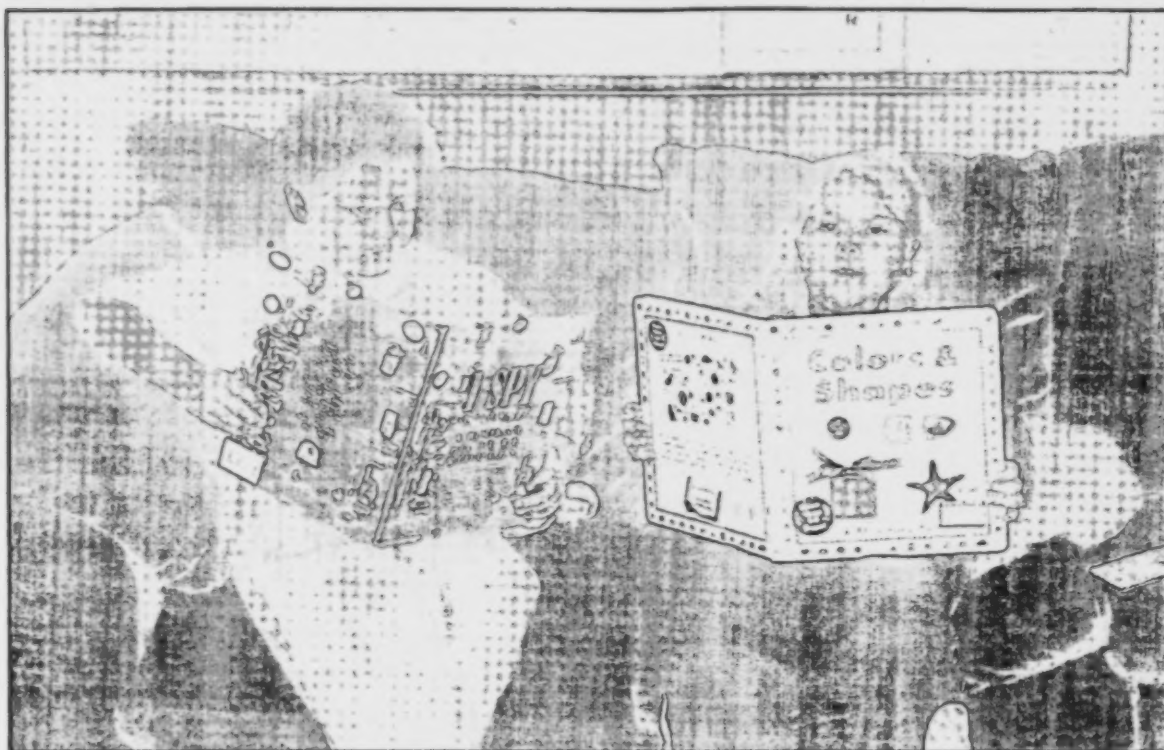
Two days a week, the bookmobile comes, and for three days, the school library is open all day. Children can come any time during the day to listen to stories, watch films, read poetry, and engage in book talks. Last year, many children enjoyed the activities so much that they stayed all day. More than a third of the 100 children who participated met their goal of reading for 30 hours during the summer.

Writing for Authentic Purposes

Although reading has become a favorite activity for many kids, writing has been a harder sell.

"Why would anyone want to write?" asks Chase-Spilman. "It's hard work." Whittier teachers tackled the problem with typical creativity and resourcefulness. The persuasive writing project, using helium balloons (see Pages 24-25), is only one example. Teachers have found that writing for an audience, "seeing their words turn into print and valued by the community," provides a powerful incentive for working hard at writing.

During the last year, children have entered a number of contests and are finding that their hard work is paying off. For example, three of Whittier's fourth-graders won all three prizes in the Martin Luther King community celebration essay contest, open to students in Pasco and two neighboring cities. Two students won prizes for writing about their pets, one student won the essay contest for Teacher Appreciation Week, and three students published poems in a book published by Creative Communication, Inc., entitled, *A Celebration of Young Poets*. Students read their essays and poems aloud at school, and often they are published in the local newspaper. "Kids know who the published authors are, and students feel pride in their accomplishments," says Chase-Spilman.



Ongoing Assessment Through Running Records and Retellings

In order to ensure that children are making progress in both decoding and comprehension, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is administered quarterly to each student who is reading within the diagnosed reading ranges of pre-primer to fourth grade. Both comprehension and decoding are assessed through Running Records and by having children retell stories.

Retellings enrich students' language in all its forms—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—and help to develop an interest in learning to read. In a retelling, children—orally or in writing—retell a selected text to convey their understanding of it, including all relevant details, responses, inferences, and associations. Obviously, oral retellings are more appropriate until students are able to write independently.

Retellings are both *good instruction* and *good assessment*. The benefits include greater oral language complexity, improved reading comprehension, increased awareness of the different ways in which texts are structured, greater articulation of connections within and between texts, and heightened use of literacy language and genre—specific conventions in students' own writing and speaking. Retellings provide the teacher with a window into students' reading strategies, background experiences relevant to the text, and understandings of particular texts (Braunger, 1996).

Retellings for assessment purposes. Braunger advises that when retellings are used for assessment purposes:

- Students should be told before reading or listening to a text that they will be asked to retell it

- The use of retellings should come after students have had extensive experience with retellings in instruction
- Students should be encouraged to read the text as many times as necessary to feel comfortable writing or orally retelling without referring back to it

Running Records of oral text reading.

In *Highlight My Strengths: Assessment and Evaluation of Literacy Learning*, Leanna Traill (1993) describes Running Records as "the most

insightful, informative, and instructionally useful assessment procedure you can use for monitoring a child's progress in learning to read." Developed by Marie Clay,

**Retellings are both
good instruction and
good assessment.**

Running Records are a form of miscue analysis. Regie Routman (1994) explains:

The teacher observes, records, and analyzes any unexpected words the child says in the process of reading aloud a connected text. Running Records are used for instructional purposes to evaluate the child's reading behaviors and set directions for teaching, to check the difficulty of a text for a child, and to monitor progress. Although it is possible to teach yourself to take a Running Record, the easiest and best way to learn it is to have a trained Reading Recovery (a short-term early intervention designed to reduce and prevent reading failure) teacher demonstrate for you and practice with you (p. 325).

Running Records can provide information that helps teachers match books with children's reading level, as evidenced by their ability to read the words in the text with 90 to 95 percent accuracy. Based on careful assessment, teachers also can provide "mini-lessons" tailored to the

needs of each child. For example, if a child is consistently having trouble reading or writing particular combinations of letters, such as br or with endings or beginnings of words, teachers can target these sounds.

"We ask, 'what kinds of interventions do we need?'" says Ramirez. "We keep a DRA workbook and examine assessment results for patterns. We look at data and go from there. We use our professional judgment."

Learning and Growing in Two Languages: Impressive Gains on the State Assessment

In addition to implementing the enrichment model, the faculty has worked together to align their curriculum with the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Three full-time Reading Recovery teachers and additional tutors (including Washington Reading Corps volunteers) provide one-to-one instruction for struggling readers. Intensive small-group work with fourth-grade students in reading, writing, math, and test taking provides individualized support for all students.

All these efforts have resulted in significant gains on the WASL. The gains are particularly impressive, considering that more than two-thirds of students taking the test are learning English as a second language. During the past three years, student performance in reading has improved from 23.2 percent of students meeting benchmarks to 37 percent. In writing, the percentage of students meeting standards has risen even more dramatically—from 2.5 percent to 32.7.

While the goal is for all students to meet state benchmarks, these scores compare favorably with the state average for students learning English as a second language. In 2001, approxi-

mately 12 percent of Washington's English Language Learner (ELL) students met the state standard in reading. These low scores reflect, in large part, the state requirement that students take the WASL in English, despite the fact that many second-language learners have limited skills in reading and writing English. Chase-Spilman explains both the difficulties of taking the state test in a second language and the advantages of being bilingual:

Our kids face a huge deficit in taking the test because they are taking it in a second language. Most have had limited experience with written English because, in our bilingual program, the fourth grade is a transition year, when they may be just beginning to have extensive experience with writing in English. Even if they are fluent in everyday English, the advanced vocabulary required by the test is just not there yet.

But by knowing two languages they will have a huge asset. When you look at what they will become as

citizens and employees, they are going to come out with dual language abilities to provide for their communities. They have the potential to become top wage earners. They will read and write and think in two languages.

Whittier has based its bilingual program on research that shows that children who have a strong foundation in their home language are able to transfer this competency to a second language. "The reason is simple," says Krashen, "Because we learn to read by reading, that is by making sense of what is on the page, it is easier to learn to read in a language we understand" (1997, p. 1).

While bilingual education has always been a controversial political issue, recent research has provided evidence that high-quality, well-implemented bilingual programs can provide the support that many children need to become proficient readers and writers in both their

Suggestions for Helping English Language Learners

- Use multimedia such as videos, pictures, and concrete objects to create connections with vocabulary words.
- Use gestures and body language.
- Speak slowly, and enunciate clearly. Do not raise your voice.
- Repeat information and review. If a child does not understand, try rephrasing in short sentences and simpler syntax.
- Try to avoid idioms and slang words.
- Try to anticipate words that might be unfamiliar and give explicit meaning to them.
- Make use of the excellent language learning that occurs among children by supporting play and small-group activities.
- Show children how much you enjoy them and appreciate their efforts to learn a new language.

Source: Neuman, S., Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (1999). *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

home language and English. The term bilingual is used to describe many different types of programs. (All employ some use, however minimal, of the student's native language combined with the teaching of English.)

"Because we learn to read by reading, that is by making sense of what is on the page, it is easier to learn to read in a language we understand."

In a longitudinal study involving more than 700,000 students, Thomas and Collier (1997) found strong evidence of the greater effectiveness of one-way (exposure to English speakers half the day) and two-way (exposure to English speakers all day) developmental bilingual programs. These programs develop full academic proficiency in both the first and second language for six or more years. They found that only these models succeeded in producing ELL achievement that reaches parity with that of native English speakers. In addition, the fewest dropouts came from these programs.

At Whittier, each year, the amount of instruction in English is gradually increased, as children become more proficient. By the second grade, if a child has been in the program since kindergarten, 30 percent of the instruction is in English. By the fifth grade, 80 percent of instruction is in English. In addition, all bilingual children engage in oral language activities in English for 45 minutes each day. Special classes, such as art, physical education, and music, are typically taught in English. The goal is to have students speak predominantly English in classes by the time they leave fifth grade.

Sheltered subject matter teaching. In Whittier's fifth-grade Sheltered English classes, teachers use lots of cues, visual aids, cooperative groups, and bilingual assistants. "It's a very low-risk environment for children so children start to get comfortable. And we do speak some Spanish," says Rivera. Well-implemented sheltered subject matter teaching (SSMT) can help children acquire the advanced vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structures necessary for fluent reading of complex texts in English, as they make the transition from bilingual programs into English-only programs.

Based on the idea that children learning a second language need "comprehensible input," teachers use pictures, charts, real objects, and occasional reading in the student's first language (Krashen, 2001). Because pleasure reading in English can be a major source of background knowledge, vocabulary development, understanding linguistic structures, and becoming familiar with our culture, Krashen suggests combining a popular literature class with sheltered grade-level content instruction.

Of course, monolingual Spanish-speaking children from Mexico arrive in Pasco at all age levels, so the goal for students to be in predominantly English classes by fifth grade is not always realized. Rivera explains Whittier's philosophy:

It's not our goal to keep them in Spanish-only classes forever. Our purpose is to give them enough instruction in their own language—give them a strong foundation in reading and writing, and then they can transfer it to English. We incorporate English as much as possible from kindergarten on. Even in bilingual classrooms, we don't speak Spanish all day long. We use English as much as possible in oral language, then in reading and in writing.

Supporting Teachers and Families

High expectations for children, teachers, and families can become overwhelming without the resources and support to reach them. As a former teacher, Ramirez is aware of how easy it is for teachers to get discouraged, and in turn, pass the discouragement on to children and families:

We are all focused here on helping all teachers do the best job they can to meet the kids' needs. Teachers are reaching the frustration point. They need to verbalize their frustrations, and we help them come back to reality. I try to remember what I needed as a classroom teacher. We have to be careful not to put on teachers more than they can handle. Teachers need to realize what teaching is and how important it is; not all children will be reading

at grade level, but all children will demonstrate growth.

We do need to do the best we can do; we need to tap resources. We have to be able to say at the end of the year, "I did what I could for the children 180 days, every day." And it's not over and done with at the end of the year, there's always next year. Growth is happening. When we realized that we needed more services, I hired four more classified faculty. The classroom teacher can't do it all by him or herself.

A team approach to professional development encourages shared responsibility for children's learning, and a weekly early release provides opportunities for sharing expertise with each other, including questions, concerns, and information from workshops and book study. The third- and fourth-grade teachers work as a team with small groups of children, placed by skill



level. By concentrating on their special interests and expertise in reading, math, and writing clusters of one hour and 40 minutes, "the instruction is very intense and direct," Chase-Spilman says. "Because we specialize in one area, our preparations are very detailed and we are very focused." She adds:

When you are teaching five to seven levels you don't have the time to individualize instruction, usually no more than five minutes a day for each child. Now we can teach very intentionally toward our goals. But movement among the groups is very flexible. We are constantly evaluating kids so that no child stagnates in one group. We meet as a team to discuss each child. By working in teams, everyone's expertise comes out. We learn to trust each other. We can say, "here are my weaknesses and here are my strengths."

The Family as First Teacher

Helping families understand their vital role in their children's education is at the center of Whittier's literacy program. Ramirez's philosophy of family involvement is deceptively simple: deliver and communicate on parents' terms. A strong and growing PTA helps organize family game nights, an annual Cinco de Mayo dinner, and informational meetings where families can learn about the WASL, math, and literacy.

Elsa Aranda, full-time home visitor, helps all staff understand how to work more effectively with families. "By going into homes, having families be a part of what we are about, we become aware of their strengths and needs," says Ramirez. "Effective communication



between home and school is crucial. We learn from every aspect." Aranda's role encompasses "a little bit of everything." She interviews all families to see what services they might need—housing, food stamps, medical coupons, information on parenting—"any needs that parents might bring to my attention."

Helping families become aware of what they can do to support their children's learning is a big part of her job. Each new family gets a welcome letter from the child's teacher. On home visits, Aranda brings each family a packet with educational information and discusses the information with them—how to read to children, how to teach them at home, why attendance is important. "A lot of what we need to do is educate our families to use what resources they have," Ramirez says. "They don't have to have a lot of expensive materials. They can use what they have at home—sing songs, tell stories. Parents need to be aware of what they can do with their children, birth to five. We try to educate and include parents." A mother of two children expressed appreciation of the many opportunities for family involvement at Whittier:

I think for our children to be able to talk to teachers in Spanish makes them more comfortable. And Whittier just has a lot more activities than most schools. I think they keep their parents informed, well informed. Walking to school helps, too; I mean, because all the parents walk, they literally walk their children to school, they come to the activities, the breakfast programs, the after school functions, the celebrations. I mean they have almost, it's really close to 100 percent—100 percent cooperation and attendance from parents.

Focus on Early Intervention

Because the staff understands the value of early intervention, Whittier's faculty also works with community Head Start programs, sharing professional development opportunities and celebrations. Head Start teachers observe in kindergarten classrooms and use the library and computer lab. "They will be our kids," explains Ramirez. Kindergarten packets—complete with cassettes with children's songs, tape player, markers, magnetic letters to spell the child's name, crayons, pencils, a flip chart of colors and shapes, and predictable books—are brought to the homes of every incoming kindergarten by the home visitor, literacy coach, or teaching assistant.

**"They will
be our kids."**

Parents have a variety of kindergarten classrooms to choose from. An all-day kindergarten, focused primarily on literacy, is offered in both English and Spanish to children identified as academically disadvantaged. Three half-day academic kindergartens are also available. In addition, an extended-day kindergarten with tutoring in literacy is offered for half-day students. "The academic focus has been a tremendous success," says Ramirez. "The children think of themselves as readers and writers, and they are. According to our DRA assessment, the children are reading at level 18—the equivalent of the end of first grade." Writing for authentic purposes begins early. For Ramirez's 40th birthday celebration, children decorated her office and wrote congratulatory messages to their principal. With typical five-year-old candor and humor, one student wrote: "Mrs. Ramirez is over the hill!"



This year, Whittier is offering a preschool program in a public housing project for 40 children, where children are instructed in their native language. Twenty children are from English-speaking families, and 20 speak Spanish. Three-year-olds who will be in the preschool program are identified; every quarter, families are invited to the gym for a celebration and are given kindergarten packets to take home. Aranda observes:

Families are very eager to take in all this information and help their kids learn. In Pasco, we try to address everything we've ever heard of to help kids succeed—housing, medical and nutritional needs, helping find a clean, quiet place for kids to study. That's hard when two to three families share a trailer or a two-bedroom apartment. When it's very basic survival, it's hard. They work so hard just for food and rent—they will take care of that before

they will buy a book. And kids need a lot of help to understand books that are taking them to places they never knew existed.

Finding Books in Spanish

The difficulties are compounded by the scarcity of books in Spanish available in the community. Despite the high percentage of Pasco's population that is Hispanic, the local library has few books in Spanish. "And you can go in a grocery store and pick up a book in English," notes Rivera. "But you can't find a book in Spanish that easily." The school library tries to fill the gap by keeping hours from 8 a.m. until late evening for parents and children to check out books. "Our library is used and used," Rivera says, "and our computer lab is open to families also."

This year, the district has purchased hundreds of books in Spanish, as well as books in English with Hispanic characters. Teachers reviewed books from a variety of publishers, and as a reward, got to keep the books and add them to their classroom libraries. Multiple copies of the books that teachers rated highly were purchased with bilingual funding, and placed in school libraries throughout the district.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges of their jobs, Whittier's teachers do not regret their decision to teach here. Rivera's comments are typical of how teachers view their role in the lives of children:

We knew the community, the children we would be teaching; we knew that we would work really, really hard. I became a teacher because with all the injustices I have experienced in my own schooling, I knew I could teach better than that. There are some very passionate people here. Many of us have had the experiences that our children face. They are children first. We do the best we can with all our children. That's what we're here for.

Chase-Spilman agrees: "We are creating a dream school—a warm, secure place for children. And it's also a community school, a resource center, and community sanctuary. There is a great deal of love and honor for our school."

Whittier's approach to learning and teaching is based on a firm belief that commitment and learning thrive in an environment that fosters resiliency for all. This belief guides the educational practices and school characteristics summarized below:

- **Whittier is a community school:** Both teachers and children live in the community; children walk to school. Two-thirds of

Whittier's teachers are Spanish/English bilingual; some have children in the school, and many have had the same experiences that most of their families face. "Our teachers are part of kids' lives every day. We live in the community," notes Ramirez.

- **Use of an enrichment model:** All faculty encourage higher-order thinking skills, multiple intelligences and avenues for success in school, building on the strengths and interests of everyone—children, teachers, families, and community members. By offering opportunities for success through multiple pathways, "children have really blossomed," literacy coach Sylvia Rivera says.
- **Shared responsibility:** Principal Ramirez focuses on supporting teachers, while holding high expectations for them. Teachers (including home visitors, literacy coaches, enrichment facilitators, and teaching assistants), in turn, have high expectations for children's achievement and behavior, and work to provide the needed support and resources to children and families. A team approach to professional development and teaching helps ensure that everyone takes responsibility without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Partnerships with families:** Faculty members work together to identify and address the needs of families. In part, because many teachers have experienced the same challenges and experiences that the families face, they are able to identify strengths and help families see themselves as resources for their children. A focus on early intervention helps ensure that children's early experiences prepare them for school. "These will be our kids," reminds Ramirez.
- **Comprehensive literacy program:** A well-stocked library available to children and their families (with lots of books in Spanish), an "elegant reading room," the use of guided reading, writing for authentic

purposes, sustained silent reading, and literature circles provide opportunities for children to read for enjoyment and comprehension. Most important, teachers demonstrate that "reading is elegant, valuable, respectful, and downright fun," as Chase-Spilman says. Reading Recovery teachers, volunteer tutors, frequent individual assessment, and small-group instruction increase opportunities for individualized teaching. By focusing on the philosophy of WASL, rather than the test scores themselves, teachers see the encouragement of higher-order thinking skills as a way to improve children's lives. "It will help them as citizens, workers, and family members," notes enrichment facilitator Debra Bracks-Jones.

- **Late-exit bilingual program:** By viewing the ability to speak Spanish as an asset rather than a problem, teachers understand the value of helping children build a strong foundation in their home language, while they learn English. Teacher Cynthia Chase-Spilman sums it up when she says, "By knowing two languages, they will have a huge asset. They will read and write and think in two languages."
- **Creative allocation of resources:** Whittier has successfully procured funding for after-school programs, professional development, early intervention, books in both Spanish and English, and to meet other identified needs. In addition, by utilizing the talents and expertise of faculty, families, and community members, children have increased opportunities for learning.

Cherry Valley Elementary School: A Collective Vision

Teacher Julie Duford and four students in her first/second-grade class are reading and discussing The Greatest Binnie in the World by Margaret Mahy. From the discussion it is clear that Duford doesn't expect her students to have all the answers to her questions about the story they are reading. She knows that sharing her thoughts as she reads and encouraging children to ask their own questions as they read is crucial to engaged reading. As she models and explains a variety of comprehension strategies, she invites the children to join her in making connections to their own lives, asking questions, making inferences, visualizing, and using a variety of fix-up strategies to repair comprehension when it breaks down—strategies that proficient readers use (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997).

After a brief picture-walk to help children get familiar with the story, to make connections with their own lives, and to make predictions, the children read a page or two. Then they discuss what they have read together. Pointing to a picture of Binnie, who has just taken a spill off his bike, Duford asks: "I wonder how he feels?" When no one offers a suggestion, Duford prompts, "What would you do if you fell off your bike? How would you feel? Can you picture that in your mind?"

"I think I'd feel a little hurt and also a little embarrassed," suggests Dylan.

"Yes, he might be feeling a little embarrassed," Duford agrees. "I've seen my kids fall off their bikes, and I've done it myself. That helps me have a picture in my mind."

"I wonder if he knows what the people are thinking," asks Melissa.

"That's a good question. Let's finish reading and see what happens. Don't be in a hurry; we want to interact with the book. Do you know what that means?"

"Making connections with the characters," offers Ali.

"Yes, it means you're making connections. You're thinking about yourself and what happens in your own life. And you guys are asking good questions when you read, the sign of a good reader. When we don't ask questions, we may not be paying attention. Even me, when I read books, I'm always asking questions while I read. OK, now we're ready to see what happens."

As this description of group reading shows, at Cherry Valley students are deep into literacy, language, and the love of stories. Supported by

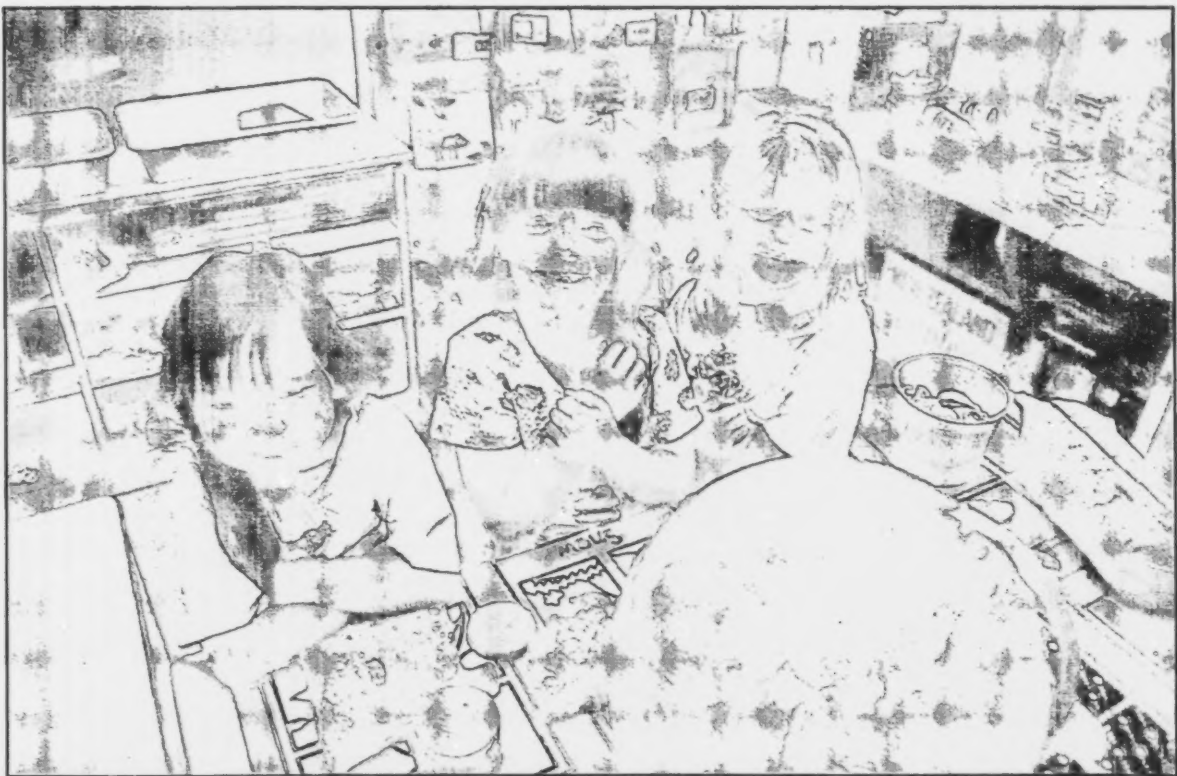
ongoing professional development based on book study, discussion, and working collaboratively with colleagues, teachers are encouraged to learn about and try out research-based strategies and support each other in the process. "We're always learning more," says Duford. "We look at children individually to see what they need to be successful."

Rather than seeking an elusive perfection—a goal that often results in fear of failure—at Cherry Valley, the faculty has created a climate that supports risk taking, experimentation, and continuous improvement. Teaching and learning are constantly evaluated by asking "what went well, what didn't, and what could be improved."

It hasn't always been the case. When Principal Elaine Meeks made the change from special education teacher to principal in 1989, an

"assessment of the current reality" revealed a daunting list of challenges: high poverty, tensions within a bicultural community, lack of family involvement, low reading scores, high rates of retention, a sense of low morale expressed by staff, and, at times, a blaming attitude. "If only the parents would. . ." was a phrase often heard in the teachers' lounge.

In addition, Meeks notes, "The curriculum was resource-and-textbook-driven. I wanted to create an educational environment where literacy would be the umbrella for everything we did here." Years of experience as a teacher had convinced Meeks that professional development was the key to positive change, and that effective professional development becomes a culture-building process. By utilizing a collaborative, shared leadership approach to school restructuring, the change that Meeks envisioned was and continues to be a slow



process; the primary approach to staff development involves individual and collective inquiry into teaching practices.

Making a Difference for All Children

To create a school culture that supports learning by all, it was clear to Meeks that two areas needed to be addressed simultaneously: *beliefs* and *structure*. It would not be enough to come to consensus on beliefs about teaching and learning; the school would have to develop the structures to enable teachers and all staff to bring about congruence between their beliefs and teaching practices.

In the beginning, pioneer staff members supported each other in experimenting with new methodologies and offered each other guilt-free critiques of their experiments. As excitement and optimism grew, more and more staff joined the growing school culture of reflective practice. One line of inquiry or changed practice led logically to the next. Each new avenue explored was embraced as a reasonable next step, rather than as one more plate to spin.

For example, multiage classrooms were added slowly, only after a careful planning process that involved faculty and families. After years of studying learning as a developmental process, staff members felt comfortable meeting the individual learning needs of their diverse students. Based on their systematic study of the research, they decided that multiage classrooms would provide many social benefits for students, and enhance teacher collaboration through team teaching of the classes. When schools use such a comprehensive, integrated approach to school change, new programs and innovations enrich and support, rather than burden teachers and students. New knowledge

and skills are worked on until they are strong enough to provide a building block for future innovations.

In 2002, Cherry Valley was named Montana's Title I Distinguished School for 2001-2002. Schools recognized with this honor are those that can show their school is making a difference for all children. Schools are rated on a number of areas, including curriculum and instruction to support achievement of high standards, opportunity for all children to meet proficient and advanced levels of performance, partnerships with parents and community, and professional development. At Cherry Valley, professional development based primarily on inquiry into educational research and practice has provided the vehicle for ongoing, sustainable change. The Schoolwide Title I Program is built around the beliefs that:

- The learner should be viewed through the lens of opportunity, not deficits.
- Differentiated learning opportunities allow each student to perform at high levels.
- Diversity is a strength. It contributes to the richness of the learning environment.
- The family and community are integral partners in ensuring academic and social success for each student.
- Literacy and "learning how to learn" are the foundations of the elementary curriculum

When schools use such a comprehensive, integrated approach to school change, new programs and innovations enrich and support, rather than burden teachers and students.

and the avenue for success in later school years and life.

Through their ongoing professional development process, faculty members have deepened their understanding of how children learn and develop, improved student outcomes, and created an inclusive learning community inside and outside of school. In this chapter, we explore this process and its effects on learning and teaching.

Professional Development: Learning as Transformation

Located on the southern shores of Flathead Lake, the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi, and on the northern end of the Flathead Indian Reservation, Cherry Valley serves a culturally and economically diverse student body. Increasing numbers of children come from families who live at or below the poverty line, with almost 60 percent qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. In addition, a large proportion of Native American children challenges the predominantly white, middle class teaching staff to examine personal values, in order to provide a school environment that reduces cultural discontinuities and builds on the strengths of all children. "Such shifts do not come easily," says Meeks. "They require research-based practices and strategies and an ability to articulate them clearly."

During her 31 years as an educator, Principal Meeks, a Milken Family Foundation National Educator, has learned to articulate her own philosophy about how children learn and develop. Her philosophical approach is steeped in developmentally appropriate practices, individualized education, and child-centered learning. "I have a deep, internalized belief that all chil-

dren can learn," she says. "I know that to be true." But she also is aware that, like children, adults need to construct their own understandings and theories: "A vision needs to be collective; it emerges from the culture. You can't get people to support someone else's vision."

Working in partnership with staff, Meeks originally spent a lot of time observing and questioning. For example, she might ask, "Why did you group the children the way you did? How does it benefit them?" In this way, teachers were asked to articulate their own theories guiding their practices, moving from, "That's the way we've always done it," to more indepth study and research into their practices. "I wasn't standing there with a clipboard checking items on a list," Meeks says. "I was asking teachers why they do things they way they do. It's incredibly powerful for teachers to be reflective about their practices" (Kneidek, 1996).

Supporting Reflective Practice

Meeks is a certified Cognitive Coaching trainer, and most of the staff at Cherry Valley have been trained in Cognitive Coaching, defined by Costa and Garmston (1994) as "a nonjudgmental process—built around a planning conference, observation, and a reflecting conference" (p. 2). The three goals of Cognitive Coaching are trust, learning, and holonomy, a term defined by the authors as: "individuals acting autonomously while simultaneously acting interdependently with the group." "This process has contributed to a cultural transformation that supports reflective practice," says Meeks.

Book study. Teachers responded positively to this approach and both teachers and students increasingly engaged in experiential learning activities centered on themes, including multicultural topics. Teachers valued these educational explorations and formed study groups to

discuss articles and books, such as Regie Routman's *Transitions and Invitations*. Over the years, teachers have read a number of books, including *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding* (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000) and *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop* (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). These book studies have supported their efforts to change from isolated skills-based practices to more meaning-focused approaches to reading and writing.

Meeks continues to spend time in each classroom, serving as teacher, reader of stories, and role model. From the beginning, weekly early release time provided time for collaboration and grade-level planning; federal Title VI monies provide additional release time, enabling teachers to visit and observe in neighboring schools.

Finding time. This year, the faculty has worked out a way to have an extra hour every other week to work on curriculum together, in addition to the districtwide weekly early release time. It works like this: Teachers arrive at school at 8 a.m., and children arrive at 8:30. Once a week, at 8:30, children from the primary grades and the third- and fourth-graders engage in a half-hour of buddy reading together. One week, all the primary children go to the third- and fourth-grade classrooms, and the next week, the older children go to the younger children's rooms.

"We can't control when school begins and ends, but we can figure out ways to effectively use the time we have," says Meeks. "What we do is build on what we are already doing. The kids have been doing buddy reading for years, and our teachers are used to sharing strategies, ideas, and leadership. This hour is time well-spent for everyone."

Peer coaching. For the past three years, a federal Title VII bilingual, Limited English Proficient grant has funded two half-time teacher mentors, who each teach half-time in their own classrooms, as part of the regular teaching staff, and work with teachers for half the day. With the goal of raising the literacy competency of Native American children, mentors work with teachers to strengthen everyone's understanding about how all children become literate.

Mentors Doug Crosby, a first-grade teacher, and Debbie Hogenson, a Title I teacher, were chosen for their strong background in literacy and in bilingual, multicultural education. They work with eight teachers each, observing and meeting weekly with each teacher, and Meeks also meets with the mentors weekly. Each classroom teacher develops an action plan around a focused inquiry regarding his or her literacy instruction. Meeks explains:

This is job-embedded, teacher-to-teacher—it's a collegial, one-on-one coaching relationship. Because the mentors have no evaluative role, and build on teachers' strengths, teachers feel free to take risks. Teachers are excited, and see it as a support, not a threat to their professional growth. It's very powerful. But peer mentoring can be threatening if it is introduced too early in a school change process, and when it is perceived by teachers as a top-down mandate. Building an inclusive school culture that supports inquiry and reflectivity is essential to its success.

This year there has been a further development in the schoolwide coaching model. Every classroom teacher observes a colleague once a month. Each colleague has a focused objective for the observation, followed by an opportunity for the two teachers to dialogue. Mentor teachers Crosby and Hogenson make this possible by taking over instruction in the classroom during the observation period. This is moving the

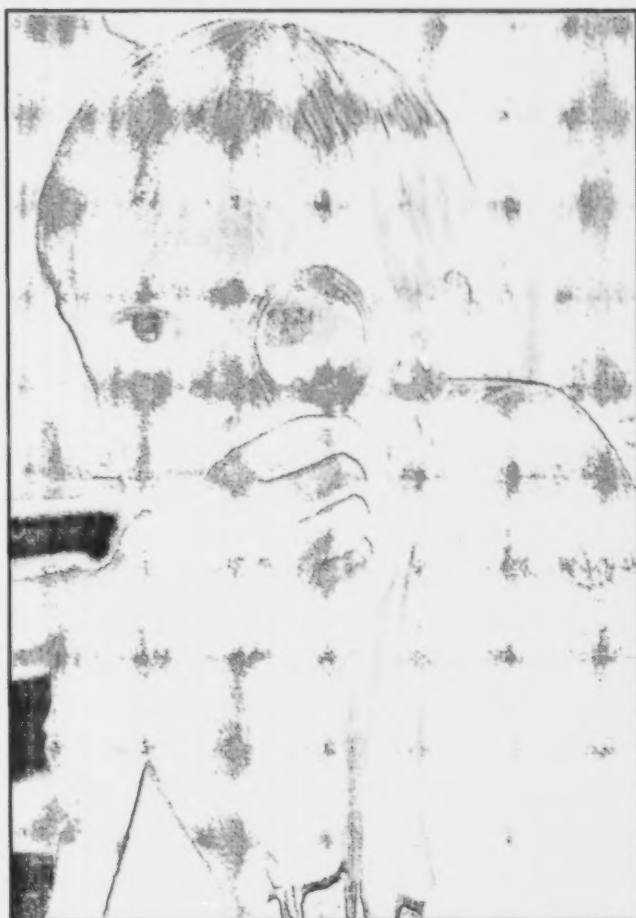
school not only to congruence of understanding, but continuity of practice in classrooms throughout the school.

In the Beginning: The Power of a Team Approach

A NWREL-sponsored summer institute in 1992 (Building Equity in Early Literacy: A Team Approach), attended by a self-selected team of teachers, proved to be a catalyst for adopting a team process as a basis for decisionmaking, which staff view as crucial for building a schoolwide community. Avoiding the pitfalls of the "one-shot workshop," in which effects on enhancing best practices are often minimal,

schools participating in the project met periodically at regional professional meetings to make presentations and reflect on their experience with the team approach to literacy program improvement.

Central to the experience was the collaborative development by each school team of a School Literacy Improvement Plan. Tailored to their school's literacy needs and specifying literacy program improvement goals and support strategies, these plans were introduced to the rest of the school staff for discussion and revision. To ensure that all teachers would be included in the school improvement vision, they expanded the Summer Institute Team to a Schoolwide Literacy Leadership Team.



From the beginning, the goal was to include teachers with a wide variety of perspectives. Meeks deliberately sought out teachers who were skeptical of the changes they were undertaking. "I told them, 'It's really important that your point of view is heard. We really need your participation.'" Although membership on the team was voluntary, Meeks reports that everyone wanted to be part of the team; over the years, the team has included almost every teacher in the school and has been expanded to include parents and support staff.

By the spring of 1993, the team had developed, with staff input, the Primary Education Philosophy. It is revisited each year, a process described by Meeks as "a wonderful experience that reflects the power of the school as a whole." The philosophy statement emphasizes the importance of shared responsibility for creating a positive environment for children's learning and the importance of active engagement and social interaction in children's construction of understanding.

After years of these discussions, all faculty members are able to articulate a number of shared beliefs, summarized by Meeks:

1. Each member of the learning community can learn and perform at high levels.
2. Learning takes place in a social context—we take responsibility for our own learning and support each other's learning.
3. Each of us can make a difference. There is a high sense of efficacy.
4. Equity is a function of opportunity. Children do not have deficits, but lack of opportunities.
5. We are responsible for engaging in dialogue (sustained, collective inquiry) about what and how we teach and the impact on student learning.
6. Students learn best in an educational environment that is physically and psychologically safe, and through educational experiences that have continuity and reflect a congruence of philosophy and beliefs.

"Every Child Counts"

According to Meeks, creating a positive school environment, as seen through the eyes of each child, is essential to convey the school's overriding belief: "Every child counts."

Fostering cooperation, rather than competition, among children and among staff creates a climate in which everyone is encouraged to help solve problems, share expertise, listen respectfully to one another, and resolve conflict openly and honestly. The faculty considers this emphasis on teamwork and community to be a crucial element in the school's continually evolving interpretation and implementation of developmentally appropriate practices and culturally responsive teaching.

An important step in the effort to reach consensus on developmentally appropriate practice was the team's development of a literacy program survey during the 1994-1995 school year. Teachers' detailed responses were used as a basis for developing the *Literacy Program Guidelines for Cherry Valley School*. To ensure consensus, the document, like the earlier statements, was sent in draft form to all teachers and revised to include their feedback. The guidelines stress the interrelationship of oral language, listening, reading, and writing, and articulate the overall goal of the literacy program: "To ensure that all children become able readers, writers, speakers, and listeners and are critical thinkers who can take responsibility for and direct their own lifetime of learning."

"I have a deep, internalized belief that all children can learn."

Changing Practices

By the 1992-1993 school year, Cherry Valley had made a number of changes in classroom practices. Almost all classrooms had increased their use of children's literature. Teachers read aloud to students on a daily basis, and parents were encouraged to do the same. Worksheets and basals had been replaced with books from a number of sources, including Richard C. Owen (*Ready to Read Series*), the Wright Group (*Sunshine, Story Box, Twig*), Pegasus, Rigby, and a wide variety of trade books. That same year, Cherry Valley invited community members to participate as guest readers in Celebrate Literacy Week, a project collaboratively planned by the staff. An evening open house exhibited children's work, and in a total school

assembly, children voted for the school's favorite book.

During the 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 school years, a literacy fair, designed both to celebrate children's literacy accomplishments and educate the community about Cherry Valley's approach to literacy instruction, was open to the public for a full day and evening. At the fair, a packet of materials, including a teacher-created handout of reading strategies, provided parents with practical suggestions to help their child with reading. The *Cherry Valley Literacy News*, also in the packet, is a collection of articles written by teachers in which they discuss a number of topics, including Big Books, literacy in the preschool setting, process writing, and the role of phonics in the Cherry Valley literacy curriculum.

Although Meeks describes the change process as necessarily slow, to an occasional visitor the changes in practice were striking. Jane Braunger, a NWREL staff member and literacy specialist who helped organize the 1992

Summer Literacy Institute, visited the school as part of the Equity in Early Literacy Project. In her case study of Cherry Valley, she writes:

Returning to the school in May 1995 (after two years), I felt as if I had stepped into a life-sized pop-up book. "Wall stories," composed by different primary classes took me on a physical reading experience as they stretched down the hallway and around the corner. In some cases the stories, in children's own words, had been typed and enlarged through computer technology; in others, children's own handwriting carried the message.

I recognized the influence of writers such as Joy Cowley and Eric Carle and enjoyed reading children's original versions of well-learned pattern books and rhyming stories. The stories wound up over classroom doorways decorated to announce the classroom's favorite book. (Each classroom determined its favorite by a vote.) The colorful and inviting room doors beckoned me to come into Charlotte's world (*Charlotte's Web*), Clifford's (*Clifford, the Big Red Dog*), or into the world of any number of appealing characters from children's literature (1995, p. 9).

From the *Cherry Valley Literacy News* **IF THERE IS ONE THING YOU CAN DO!**

Research shows us that "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children." It's as simple as that! It is through reading to our children that we give them a chance to develop listening, vocabulary, sentence structure, prediction and problem-solving skills. These skills and strategies are the tools we use to become lifelong readers.

Just 15 to 20 minutes a day spent reading to your children will make the world of difference. This is not only true for young children; read to your child all the way through school. Children may be able to read very well when they are in the third grade but they are also able to listen to and understand books written for much older children. By reading to these children you continue to increase their knowledge of words and the world around them.

Starting Where the Learner Is

A central tenet of Cherry Valley's literacy program is that teaching is tailored to the individual needs of each child. The literacy model advocates that teachers start with the child, understanding his or her strengths and needs and matching the learner with appropriate resources. Relatively small class sizes (20 children in grades one through three, and 24 in fourth grade) help teachers to individualize instruction. Community members who serve as "reading visitors" share enjoyable reading experiences with emergent readers, providing additional opportunities for children to read out loud to an adult or listen to a story in a supportive, interactive, one-on-one session.

Literacy Strategies From New Zealand

Independent book tubs, containing books selected to match the children's independent reading level, provide each child a selection from which to choose for reading in class or to take home for reading with parents. The use of book bags, which all children—even the preschoolers—take home every day, is a strategy developed in New Zealand and used throughout the country's schools. Ironically, the strategy found its way into most American classrooms through New Zealand's Reading Recovery Program, an early intervention for first-grade students who are having difficulty learning to read and write.

Reading Recovery offers an individualized program that focuses on fostering the child's development of a range of flexible strategies to be used independ-

ently when reading books or writing stories. The district has two certified Reading Recovery teachers and one in training who spend 30 minutes a day working with identified children on a one-on-one basis for 12 to 20 weeks. It has proved to be an effective program, with most children finishing the school year in the median of their class. Contributing to the success of this program is a classroom environment that supports the child's learning, using teaching methods similar to those used by Reading Recovery.

The Centralized Reading Resource plays a key role in efforts to individualize reading instruction. In this way, more academically competent children are challenged, and children who may still be at the emergent stage of literacy can gain confidence and competence by selecting from books at their reading level. This library



contains thousands of books that have been leveled in a continuum from emergent to early to fluent readers, who have a reading age of 12 to 14 years. Not only do teachers have a resource that they can draw on to meet the individual needs of all their students, but resource folders that contain ideas on how other teachers have used that particular book are kept with each book.

According to Cherry Valley's Web site (www.polson.k12.mt.us/cherry), "there may be an idea of how to innovate the book to make a class-authored traveling book, ideas on art projects, or a photograph of a wall story that has been made using ideas from the book."

Teachers have found that, "One of the major advantages of using a system like this is that, as budgets get smaller, we are able to pool our resources schoolwide, and instead of having duplication of resources in each classroom, we now have books centralized for all to use."

The faculty also has created a Literacy Resource Book for teachers and staff members. This resource includes information about the major constructs and practices in use at Cherry Valley, including *Best Practices in Literacy*, developed by the faculty. This document helps guide instructional practices in each classroom, creating a seamless educational experience for students.

Philosophy Cherry Valley School

We believe learning is a process that begins at birth and is lifelong. Consideration of equity and diversity are a basis for ensuring success for all students. Varying social contexts allow children to purposefully select, interpret, and integrate information about their world. All students are expected to become confident, resourceful, disciplined, and self-motivated learners. Responsibility to self and community are emphasized.

Meaningful acquisition and application of content knowledge and process skills is achieved through problem solving, critical thinking, decisionmaking, and creativity. There are opportunities for student choice and time for discovery learning with student experience being central to instruction.

Literacy is the primary and most essential goal for all students. Literacy is defined as proficiency in not only the written and spoken word, but also includes numeracy, the arts, and emotions. The curriculum is presented in an integrated format respectful of individual learning styles and abilities. Flexible groupings are based on the nature of the activity and varying rates of growth and development of individual children.

Learning occurs most effectively in a culture that is safe and nurturing. School personnel, parents, and the community share the responsibility to work together to provide a positive school environment.

Linking assessment with instruction.

Comprehensive, balanced assessment and careful monitoring of student progress are a major emphasis. A number of assessments help teachers make educational decisions, including literature logs of books read, individual reading conferences, Running Records (in which teachers keep track of what words children know and strategies used during reading), tapes, and transcriptions or retellings of material read. Key to the assessment process is systematic observation of children engaged in authentic reading and writing activities.

At the beginning of first grade, all students are assessed with Marie Clay's Observation Survey, which measures children's knowledge of letters and sounds of letters, concepts of print, writing vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and sight words. Children in kindergarten through second grade are assessed using the STAR Early Literacy Assessment, and Running Records are administered every three weeks. Teachers have found that in the early stages of reading, frequent assessment helps to ensure that each child has opportunities to read books at both the independent level (as evidenced by their ability to read the words with 95 percent accuracy), and at the instructional level (with 90 to 94 percent accuracy), with teacher and/or peer support.

Each day, teachers target two or three children to observe, recording their observations in monitoring notebooks. These observations provide information about children's learning styles, attitudes, strengths, and needs. For example, one report reads, "Stays with the text if not pushed. Limited fluent words, uses caps and periods appropriately."

Writing is assessed using the NWREL-developed six writing traits—ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and con-

ventions. In addition, the *Holistic Writing Scale*, developed by Tammy Elser and consistent with the six-trait assessment, provides information on children's progress in fluency and conventions. Both writing samples and graphs of Running Record assessments are put into a literacy portfolio, and provide a picture of children's progress in reading and writing over time. The portfolios, which also include a current teacher's monitoring notes of the student's progress in reading and writing and the most recent report from the STAR Early Literacy assessment, are transferred to the middle school when students leave Cherry Valley.

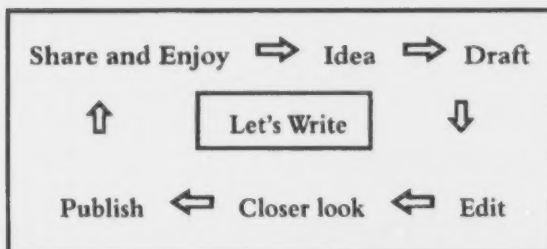
Doug Crosby's Classroom

One of the catalysts of literacy program improvement was the arrival during the 1994-1995 school year of Doug Crosby, a native New Zealander who is an experienced primary teacher. Also a winner of the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award, Crosby has introduced many strategies that were pioneered in New Zealand, which has one of the highest literacy rates in the world. Currently dominating his classroom is a large teepee that provides a place to go "to read and write and get into another dimension." Blocks, Legos, easels, and a rice table offer multiple opportunities for hands-on learning and creating.

Books, hand puppets, stuffed animals, and examples of children's work are everywhere. Newly painted pictures hang from a clothesline that rings the room; whimsical clay figures wait to be taken by the visiting artist to be fired in a kiln. Children's self-published books and letters from pen pals from New Hampshire are prominently displayed. For a substantial part of the day, children are curled up with books on the well-worn, comfortable sofa and on braided rugs with soft pillows, reading individually and out loud with friends. Others are listening to

tape-recorded books at the listening center. Tables, rather than isolated desks, provide opportunities for cooperative learning. A writing center—complete with paper, pens, crayons, markers, paints, stamp sets, fancy-cut scissors, and glitter—invites children to write and illustrate their stories.

The walls are filled with print. There are calendars, posters, graphs, paintings, and friezes. One large poster in the writing center describes the writing process:



Other posters reflect Cherry Valley's literacy philosophy. A quote from Frank Smith, professor of education at the University of Victoria, reminds readers: "In reading, what the brain says to the eye matters more than what the eye says to the brain." Another proclaims:

Literacy is not a 45-minute period of instruction
 With behavioral objectives and predictable outcomes.
 Literature is enjoying, learning, feeling,
 Being, sensing, laughing, crying,
 Hating, deciding, loving, growing,
 Sympathizing, listening.
 Literature is all day
 Being and becoming
 Growing and growing.

Reading and writing go together. Crosby is aware that "to some, my room may appear to be



disorganized and occupied by a bunch of talkative kids." But years of teaching experience and critical reflection have shaped the deceptively simple philosophy that guides his teaching practices:

I like to think of it as a self-motivated class of engaged learners. My basic teaching philosophies are rather simple, particularly when talking about the language arts field. I begin with the notion that all reading and writing must have a valid purpose. Then, I teach reading by getting the kids to read, and I teach writing by getting the kids to write. With that, you have my program.

Research shows that when reading and writing are taught together, the benefits are greater than when they are taught separately. When children read, they attend to the linguistic features, vocabulary, and structures of written language that they learn to incorporate into their writing (Pikulski, 1994; Tierney & Shannahan, 1991). When children write words, they attend to the details of those words. In this way, writing leads to improved phonemic awareness and word recognition, which in turn lead to improved reading.

Developmental or invented spelling, in particular, can be a powerful tool for developing phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge, and offers teachers an observation window into children's emerging understanding of symbol/sound correspondence. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998), editors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, concluded that "invented spelling can be helpful for developing understanding of the identity and segmentation of speech sounds and sound-spelling relationships" (p. 7).

In Crosby's classroom, and throughout the school, both of these activities—reading and writing—take center stage. Children learn that

writing is a way of describing images and events. They are encouraged to think of things that are meaningful to them as the basis of their writing. The writing process is described as a recursive process that starts with sharing and enjoying, and progresses through a flexible process that includes the idea, a draft, editing, a closer look, publishing, and sharing and enjoying. Children begin in kindergarten to write for an audience and to think of themselves as authors.

Young children often use poetic images, metaphors, and unique imagery. When encouraged to use language creatively, the stories they write often reflect their vivid imaginations. One of Crosby's first-graders provided this explanation of why ladybugs are all female:

Once upon a time there were ladybugs and man-bugs. But they were attacked by an army of ants. The man-bugs were very brave and fought back. But the ants were too strong, and the man-bugs all died defending their wives and children. To this day, there are only ladybugs.

On a 1997 visit to Cherry Valley, a NWREL writer and editor described one of Crosby's many writing lessons for beginning first-graders:

When first-grade teacher Doug Crosby needs help with his writing, he doesn't have to look far. Any of the 20 children sitting comfortably on a braided rug, an easy chair, or an overstuffed sofa will chime out letters, concepts, and sounds that help Crosby get his thoughts down on paper.

It's a group writing process that Crosby begins with a story plan—a drawing of what he is about to write. Once children identify the drawing, Crosby moves onto the story writing. "I'm going to start my story with a special letter called . . . now what is that special letter that starts a story?" Crosby asks.

"A capital letter," the children answer in chorus. "Yes, yes, that's it. But why a capital letter?" Crosby prods. "Because it's the first word in the sentence," children answer. "Ah, of course. And we know that the first word in a sentence starts with a capital letter. Thank you," says Crosby.

He continues his one-sentence story: "Last night I had hot dogs for dinner." When he gets to the word "hot dogs," Crosby again asks the children for help. "What sounds do you hear in 'h h h h o t d o g,'" he asks, drawing out the sound of the letter "h." Again, the children chime in, identifying the letter and assisting in spelling the whole word. (Such learning, Crosby notes later, is phonics with a twist. Children are identifying letters in the context of words and stories, not as isolated bits of information without real meaning to them.)

When the story is complete, the children have participated in a process of writing, drawing, spelling, and storytelling that lays a foundation for their own work. "Now I want you to close your eyes for a minute," Crosby instructs his students, "and think about something you want to write." He offers suggestions for students to reflect upon before they scatter to tables and begin their own writing and publishing projects. Later that day, they will read their work to the class during Author's Chair, a time for sharing and feedback (Kneidek, 1996).

Writing for an Audience

This writing process begins in kindergarten, and the pictures that young children draw to begin their simple stories are the precursors to the schematic maps that older children use. In Carla Farnstrom's fourth-grade class, children begin by sketching out a schematic overview of what the story will be about. Just as teachers do in kindergarten through third grade, Farnstrom encourages children to write about what interests them—what they know about or like. Each child works at the grouped desks to perfect a story, brainstorm ideas, or

edit. They work at their own pace, with constant support from their fellow students and their teacher. The process goes like this:

- Each student writes the main topic in the center. It is circled, and surrounded by the ideas that they brainstorm about the topic. This sketch is always the first page of every student's story.
- Because all writing is for an audience, rather than simply an exercise, they also write at the top of the page: Topic, Audience, and Purpose. They decide whether they're writing a poem or story, whether it is to inform or delight, and whether the language is for a formal or casual reader.
- Then, after careful brainstorming of the topic and genre, they write.
- Each student's work is an ongoing work in progress that does not end by handing in the piece to the teacher. Students review and edit their own work so that they learn to correct grammatical and spelling mistakes, but also to read with a critical eye.
- Farnstrom reads each story and selects a few key things to concentrate on in her editing. At this point, although the spelling may be uneven, she may note that there are verb agreements that need attention and edit only those mistakes.
- When students' work is returned to them at this stage, they may sign up for a conference with Farnstrom. The conference is a final collaborative editing session that is the precursor for the story's publication.
- At these conferences, Farnstrom talks to the student about their assessment of the piece and what they consider might need to be done to get it in final shape for publishing.

An Array of Literacy Activities

The school day is made up of an array of opportunities to engage in authentic and intrinsically motivating literacy activities. Each child has an individual plan that enables him or her to plan

his or her activities each day, ensuring a balance of individual reading, buddy reading (reading with a friend), guided small-group reading, listening to stories (with and without explicit instruction in decoding and comprehension), modeled and draft writing, publishing, and conferencing with the teacher. In addition, every day children sign up on a voluntary

Books That Facilitate Phonemic Awareness

Teachers can provide many enjoyable activities that promote the development of this important competency. We know that children develop phonemic awareness from the oral and written language they are exposed to during their preschool and primary years. In particular, books and songs with rhymes and alliteration, and language play, such as tongue-twisters and Pig Latin, help children learn to hear and manipulate the separate sounds in words.

Nursery rhymes are a particularly rich source of rhymes and rhythm, and have helped generations of children develop phonemic awareness. Author Nellie Edge describes nursery rhymes as "basic cultural literacy—they are gifts of language children deserve to win" (2000, p. 33).

Dr. Seuss's many rhyming books have long enchanted readers—from toddlers to adult:

The cat in the hat. (1957). New York: Random House.
The cat in the hat comes back. (1958). New York: Random House.
Green eggs and ham. (1960). New York: Random House.
Hop on pop. (1963). New York: Random House.
There's a wocket in my pocket. (1974). New York: Random House.
One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish. (1981). New York: Random House.
Dr. Seuss's ABC book. (1986). New York: Random House.
Fox in socks. (1990). New York: Random House.

Rhyming books by popular children's author Maurice Sendak include:

Chicken soup with rice. (1990). New York: Harper Trophy.
Pierre: A cautionary tale in five chapters and a prologue. (1990). New York: Harper Trophy.
Alligators all around: An alphabet. (1991). New York: Harper Trophy.

More Favorites:

Hughes, S. (1998). *Alfie's ABC's*. New York: Lothrop Lee and Shepard.
Archambault, J., & Martin, B. Jr. (1989). *Chica chica boom boom*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
Berenstain, J., & Berenstain, S. (1987). *Berenstain bear B book*. New York: Random House.

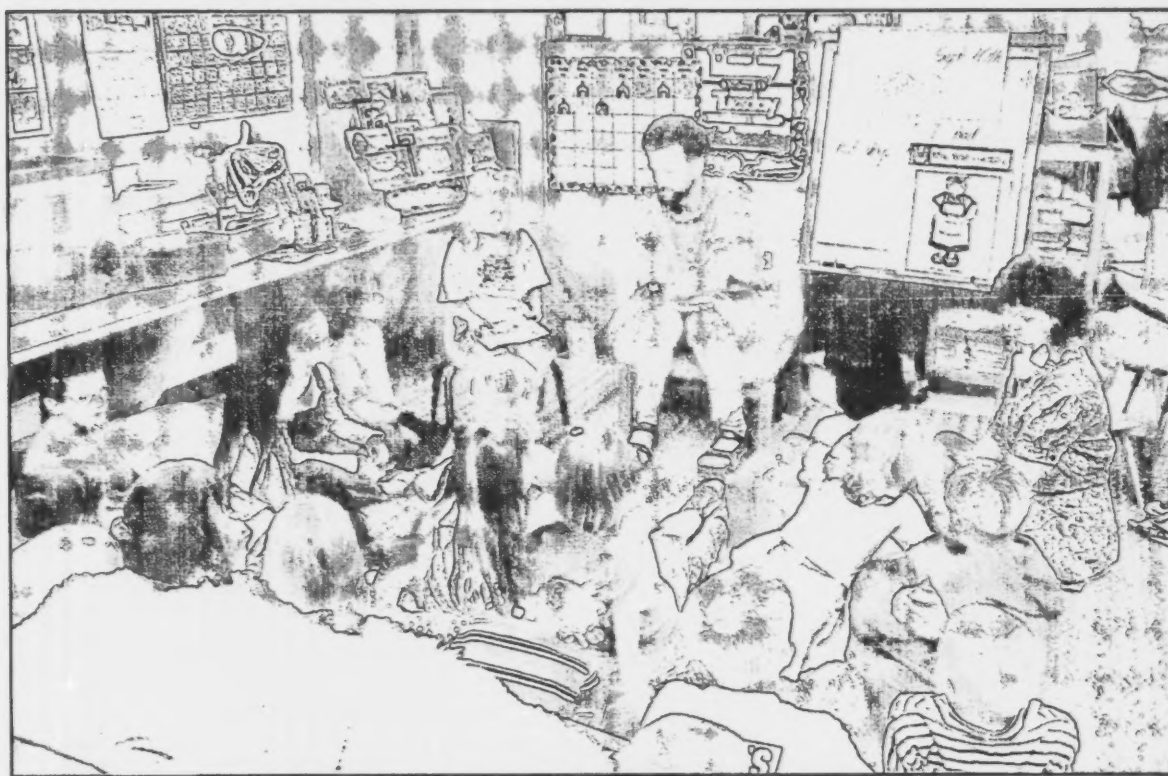
basis to read to the class, a practice that the children initiated themselves.

Book bags filled with books chosen by the children go home every night for reading with parents. Parents are encouraged to use a range of flexible strategies to aid comprehension but, above all, the message to parents (highlighted in the *Cherry Valley Literacy News*) is, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading—is reading aloud to children. . . . Just 15 to 20 minutes a day spent reading to your child will make the world of difference."

Multiple opportunities for writing are provided, including writing letters to pen pals, family, and friends; writing stories and publishing books; journal writing; writing reports; and making science observations. When writing first drafts, children are encouraged to use their "developmental spelling." Crosby prefers the

term "developmental" to "invented" spelling, because, like learning to talk, learning to write and to spell follow predictable developmental stages. Although spelling is primarily learned within the context of writing, the move to standard spelling is facilitated by concentrating on a few spelling words each week. The school targets 230 words, each considered essential for spelling and writing, that all children are expected to know by third grade.

Teachers ensure individual relevance of the spelling words by targeting words from students' draft writing, words that children consistently make close approximations of using their developmental spelling. Through a process of writing and studying the word, covering it and forming a mental image, writing it again and checking for accuracy, children become competent spellers without the drill that often accompanies mastering this skill.



In addition to a wide variety of trade books in the classroom and school libraries, children's own published books can be checked out and taken home. Modeled after books that were sent by their New Hampshire pen pals, these colorfully illustrated, computer-written books include a publishing page, a title page with a dedication, the child's story, an "about the author" section, and a comment page for parents and visitors to use in responding to the book.

While many children write original stories, younger children who have difficulty coming up with their own ideas are encouraged to retell a traditional story, such as *Thumbelina*, or to create an innovation of a familiar story. For example, one child wrote *Red Deer, Red Deer*, a variation of Bill Martin's popular *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*.

Reading, Writing, and Nurturing

In the primary grades, Floppy Rabbit's Journal provides additional opportunities for reading, writing, and nurturing. Each night, Floppy (a stuffed bunny) goes home with a different child, with a reading bag that contains a draft writing book, a journal, and colored pencils in tow. On the first page, "Welcome to Floppy Rabbit's Journal," it is explained to parents that because "Floppy is not too good at writing yet," it is up to the person who takes Floppy home to write about Floppy's adventures at his or her house.

Children first write in their draft writing book, and after a conference with parents to correct spelling and punctuation and to "help it make sense," the adventure is written into Floppy's journal, accompanied by a colored picture. In addition, parents are encouraged to write their own version of Floppy's stay, so children can see that their parents also like to write. Today Floppy has returned from Amanda's house,

and Amanda reads aloud her own story of Floppy's adventures on his overnight visit, including Floppy's new wardrobe, the yummy meal of pizza and carrots, and his difficulty finding her bedroom in her big house.

Literacy Week

Each year, Cherry Valley celebrates Literacy Week, usually in early spring. It is a very busy week, with many different literacy activities. Guest readers come into the school all week to read to classes. Teachers and students decorate their classroom doors like their favorite book covers. Visitors, students, and staff are enchanted by old favorites, such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *Curious George*, and newer titles, including *Amelia Bedelia*, *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain*, and *Follow the Drinking Gourd*.

Everyone's favorite day is Book Character Dress-Up Day. Book characters come alive as teachers and students dress up as their favorite book character. Snow White, the peddler from *Caps for Sale*, *Harry Potter*, the *Paperbag Princess*, *Waldo*, and *Huck Finn* meet for the first time, as literacy activities take over the gym all day. An evening open house welcomes family and community members. "Our goal is to demonstrate to our community the many and varied approaches we have to literacy and how they can support their own children," says the Cherry Valley Web site (www.polson.k12.mt.us/cherry/).

A Busy Publishing Center

For years, children have been publishing their books, which are displayed in classrooms and the library, as well as traveling home with children to be enjoyed by the whole family. It soon became clear that teachers could not keep up with the volume of books that were ready for

publishing. For the last several years, an open, multipurpose room has served as a publishing center, complete with several older computers, a couch, and rug. Staffed by numerous parent and community volunteers who do some of the typing and all of the binding and laminating, the room is always full of groups of children anxious to see their book become part of the school community.

Recently their work found a larger audience, due to a number of parents who regularly bring children's published books to Polson's doctors' and dentists' offices. Now, along with copies of *Field and Stream* and parenting magazines, local residents can not only read the latest student works, but they can also sign their name and write responses to the books on the comment page.

In addition, children's books can be found in a local nursing facility. This year, both in multi-age groups and with their classrooms, children have been visiting a local nursing home and establishing relationships with one or more residents. Children then interview the residents, who frequently tell stories about their lives. Young children may simply remember as much as they can of these stories, while older children take notes or use tape recorders. They then

write the stories, share them with the residents, who make suggested changes and edits, publish the stories, and take them back to the nursing home, where they read to the elderly residents. The project has been met with enthusiasm

from the staff at the nursing facility and the residents themselves. A social worker at the facility writes:

**Everyone's
favorite day is
Book Character
Dress-Up Day.**

I have witnessed contacts between young and old, which can only be described as "touching."

Residents are able to hold a child's hand or see a bright young smile. They look forward to these visits and are delighted by the children's eagerness to please and entertain. These intergenerational exchanges are a benefit for both age groups. They nurture an understanding and acceptance of age difference.

From a literacy standpoint, the project is well designed for many reasons. Students know that they will share their products with residents in the nursing home. This makes the project more meaningful—they know their work will have an audience. The project is designed to spark conversations between generations—dialogues certain to expand students' vocabularies and to inform students about their community's history. As students revise and edit their work, they gain proficiency in their skills as writers.

Family Engagement: Multiple Opportunities for Participation

Like most schools, Cherry Valley has found that while there is no trick to attracting white middle-class parents to school events, other families may be disinclined to come to school due to a variety of reasons, including lack of time, their own negative experiences in school, and cultural incongruity.

Understanding these barriers, Cherry Valley's Family Enrichment Coordinator organizes non-threatening and enjoyable activities that provide opportunities for the whole family to participate. Frequently transportation is provided, and because the whole family is invited, child care is not a barrier. Because literacy "is the primary and essential goal for all students," families are encouraged to participate in a col-

orful array of literacy activities both at home and at school.

An emphasis on viewing the child holistically, within the context of the family and community, combined with a philosophy of building partnerships with families has enhanced family participation in learning activities and helped establish reciprocally supportive relationships. While not all families agree with all of Cherry Valley's educational practices, engaging parents in a wide array of schoolwide activities helps break down barriers. The philosophy of including—rather than marginalizing—parents who have concerns ensures that conflict is dealt with in a positive way. Meeks notes: "We have to communicate with parents. Our approach is not a rejection of the basics. We take current knowl-

edge of learning theory and find better ways to teach and learn. We need to have the ability to articulate what we're doing."

Celebrating the lives of family and community members takes many forms, and often integrates many aspects of literacy—oral, written, and the visual arts. Each year, at a Family Heritage Museum in the school cafeteria, children display the results of their research on their own family tree. Interviews with parents and grandparents yield rich stories, which the children write and accompany with photographs and illustrations.

Family Fun Nights

At family fun nights, families engage in a variety of open-ended art, literacy, music, and cooking activities with their children. These informal evenings have played a key role in helping families feel comfortable and welcome in the school community. While some activities target one or two classes, others are schoolwide; all are averaging a 70 percent turnout. During one week, over three nights, a total of 276 parents and grandparents of kindergarten children made play dough together with their children. These informal evenings are not only a perfect setting for families to get to know each other and school staff but offer opportunities for teachers to talk about how family members can participate in their children's lives in positive ways. First-grade teacher Doug Crosby explains:

In this country, we often read for extrinsic rewards, like pizza. It's the American way. What we need is intrinsic motivation, meaning sharing. We work very hard to get families involved in literacy activities with their children—not focusing on a particular set of words but establishing a habit that keeps going. Younger siblings see their older brothers and sisters reading with their parents. They see the



enjoyment, and they want to read, too. Often younger siblings of children in our Reading Recovery Program don't qualify for this program because of this early involvement with reading.

Traveling Books

Creating "traveling books" is another effective strategy used in this small Montana school. Written as a group, with each child contributing a page on a shared topic, these books offer opportunities for families to see the progress of all the children in the class, as well as of their own child. Crosby comments:

Think about a worksheet—it might take 10 or 15 minutes to fill out a worksheet, and it will be thrown away or hung on the fridge. Take a traveling book. It might take an hour to make it. Each child might read it with his or her mom and dad for 10 minutes. It comes back to the classroom, becomes part of the classroom library, and is read during the day. At the end of the year, it becomes part of the school library. How many hours of reading and enjoyment is that book giving to kids?

Authors' Parties

Authors' parties, in which parents, grandparents, and friends are invited to listen to children read their own individually written and illustrated books, provide multiple opportunities for children to share books with adults. Adults first listen to their own child read, make written comments in the comment section, and then move on to another child. Parents have expressed to Cherry Valley staff that they are pleased with the opportunity to see not only their own child making progress, but all of the children developing into competent writers.

Creating a Child and Family Support Program: The Polson Partnership Project

By 1992, the transformation of Cherry Valley's literacy program was well underway. Yet, despite improved educational practices and increased family involvement, not all students were successful. Poor attendance and behavior problems often got in the way of learning. "It became clear," says Meeks, "that until needy families can have their human service needs met in a comprehensive, coordinated, and personalized manner, it is unlikely that children from these families will demonstrate improved outcomes."

Teachers were particularly concerned that many of the Native American children, who make up approximately 38 percent of Cherry Valley's first- through fourth-graders, were "falling through the cracks" of the dual service-delivery system provided by tribal and non-tribal agencies. Instead of combining resources to better serve Native American children and their families, poor coordination and jurisdictional battles between the two governments often led to lapses in case management and a general fragmentation of service.

In 1993, the Polson Partnership Project (PPP), a school-based child and family support program, was established. Designed to "ensure that all children have a positive, successful school experience and to link families with needed services," the program is directed by a working team that includes the principal, classroom teachers, a licensed clinical social worker, a family enrichment coordinator, child and family partners, the school counselor, representatives of the Native American parent committee and the PTA, and the district superintendent.

CVTV: Cherry Valley News

As a video of the school is displayed on the screen, the announcer booms, "This is CVTV, Cherry Valley News, with third-graders Erica and Dante!" On the screen, the two smiling anchors sit with their hands folded in front of them on the table. They greet their viewers much as any other news anchor would, and begin reading the school news for the month of March.

But anchors Erica and Dante don't just read the news. Video clips and digital photographs of a wide variety of engaging school activities bring the stories to life: a snowshoe trip to Glacier Park, a pet show, Book Characters' Dress-up Day, a community Potpourri, the annual art show, a music concert and talent show, and a celebratory lunch for teachers.

Announcements are made, such as the Tribal Education teacher, student, and parent of the year (congratulated with a message by Principal Elaine Meeks). The final story announces the student and teacher birthdays for the month, with a background soundtrack of the students singing happy birthday. The anchors do an official sign-off, and then we overhear their "informal chat" complimenting the background display of the school's mascot made by one classroom, as the camera pulls away.

The videotapes, edited and complete with a script (read by the anchors) and a soundtrack of popular music, are the idea of a former teacher at Cherry Valley. At the end of each month of school, she takes the video footage, taped by students, teachers, parents, and other volunteers, and produces the half-hour newscasts. Third- and fourth-grade students take turns as anchors, and once per month, the video is transmitted into each classroom. As the class watches the news together, teachers make a tape of the video, which can then be checked out and taken home by students, just like the popular *Traveling Books*.

Although originally thought of as primarily a literacy project for students, it has turned out to be an excellent way to let families know what is happening in the school, especially for those families who may not be able to attend family events at the school. Teachers have also found that some parents have felt more comfortable coming to the school, having a better idea of what to expect after seeing pictures and video clips of what happens at school events.

Students benefit from the opportunity to practice presentation and public speaking skills, and are engaged by an activity that has a real purpose. As students watch the videotapes of their classmates in the anchor role, they learn to make good eye contact and use expressive voices to describe the who-what-when-where-and-why of the events.

In addition to special events, the videos show pictures and short video clips of student work as well as students, teachers, and families in action. Videos depict a school with a cooperative atmosphere and a climate where each student is valued. Consistent with the school's philosophy, recognition is given to event organizers and participants in each story. The video has proved to be an excellent way to document the many family- and community-involvement activities that take place in and out of school—evidence of the hard work and fun engaged in by students, staff, and families.



The mission of the project is to define and create resiliency-based collaborations that build on family strengths, cultivate healthy attributes, and create a care-giving environment in the school. "The result," says Cherry Valley social worker Co Carew, "is a protective shield that helps ensure school success for all students." Funded by a variety of grants, program components have been added slowly over the years to address the needs of teachers, children, and families. They include:

- Teacher education, consultation, and support
- Cultural enrichment activities incorporated into the regular classroom and curriculum
- Early intervention for at-risk children and their families, including case management, referral and collaboration with community resources, individual and family counseling, and a child and family mentor program
- Parents as Teachers, early learning for children birth through age five
- After-school program focusing on cultural and creative arts activities
- Demonstration site for the Montana Early Literacy Model, focusing on family literacy and caregivers of children—birth to five years
- Involving parents in their children's education and development in a wide variety of ways
- School-based family fun activities
- Families and Schools Together (FAST), a prevention program that focuses on building relationships within the family, across families, and with school and community personnel
- High school-aged role models for elementary/middle school-aged youth

- Little Cherries, an early literacy and art program for toddlers and preschoolers, and Cherry Blossoms, a program for toddlers that focuses on sensory stimulation and socialization
- The Cherry Orchard Family Center, which offers an inviting space for families to engage in interactive learning activities and to meet other families

It is important to note that these components have been added and integrated into the school culture only after careful study and preparation, and supported by additional funding and faculty. Only when teachers understand the purpose and benefits of innovations can they support them and make them an integral part of their practice. Meeks explains how the Polson Partnership Project is both supported by and supportive of the faculty:

We are seeing that commitment to the project and eventual success for students is dependent on strong support from the school personnel. It is critical that the program be fully integrated as part of the school program with the understanding that to provide for human service needs is an important part in ensuring equity in education for all students.

Having Fun

Having fun together is also critical to the school's success. The new colorful climbing wall, attached to the gym wall and designed to resemble the Mission mountains that border Polson's eastern boundary, was a community effort, built with money raised by the PTO. Children love the challenge of traversing the wall from side to side, using the letters, numbers, and shapes to hold on to and find a foothold. While children wait for a turn, they can read the books from the book tubs placed nearby.

Recently, at a celebration of secretary's day, a suspiciously feminine Bob Dylan with an off-key harmonica and an unusually raucous Carole King paid a visit to the school assembly, where they paid tribute to the secretaries by playing a variation of "Blowin' in the Wind" entitled "Blowin' in the School." During Literacy Week—the day when everyone dresses up as a favorite book character—Meeks and several teachers entertained the entire school with an unrehearsed but convincing version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Children watched in horror as their principal came close to taking a bite of the poisoned apple. "No, no!" they shouted, all but the most jaded fourth-graders drawn into the drama. Meeks notes:

I've worked for the last 13 years to support the creation of a school where students and teachers joyfully engage in learning, parents and community members are authentic and valued members of the school community, and there is an abundance of caring, compassion, and celebration.

Reducing Cultural Discontinuity for Culturally Diverse Students

There is often a chasm between the child's home life and life at school that is not bridged by the conventional elementary school. Sadly, many Native American children drop into this chasm and eventually drop out (Little Soldier, 1992, p. 16).

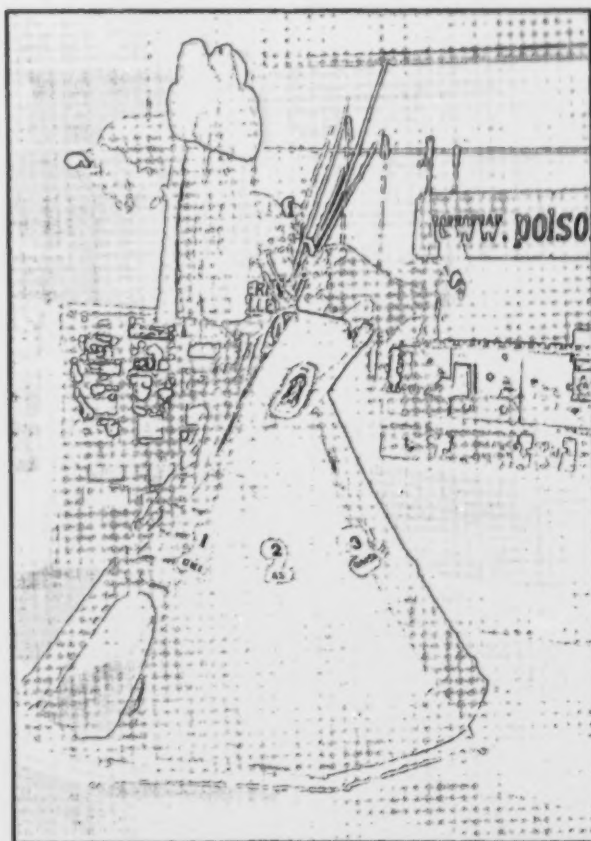
Although the Polson Partnership Project serves all children and their families in a variety of ways, approximately 50 percent of children who benefit from the highly specific, individualized, and intensive components are from Native American families. Alaska Native and American Indian children begin dropping out of school much earlier than other groups, often in the middle school years, and research has shown that school failure often begins early, even in kindergarten (Entwisle, 1995; Slavin,

Karweit, & Wasik, 1993). Native American children stand a greater likelihood than any other group of being labeled handicapped or learning disabled. They are also more likely to be held back in first grade (where retention rates are highest for all children), and placed in special education by second grade (Paul, 1991).

Theories of cultural discontinuity help to explain the difficulty encountered by some students in adapting to a school environment foreign to the societal norms of their ethnic community. Because schools typically reflect the values and norms of middle-class European Americans, children from other cultural groups may have difficulty adapting. Researchers have found that by the age of eight, disparities between the home and school culture may undermine children's enthusiasm for learning

and their belief in their capacity to learn (Entwisle, 1995).

The Cherry Valley faculty works hard to reduce disparities and create a welcoming environment. When a visitor walks into Cherry Valley School, she sees a permanent teepee in the lobby adorned with Kootenai words and symbols. Photographs of local chiefs of the Salish and Kootenai tribes are on the school walls. Culturally relevant Family Fun Nights at the school and an annual "Celebration of Families" Pow Wow are sponsored each year. "The message," says Meeks, "is that this school belongs to every child and family." Connecting culturally diverse families to the school does not end at the school building. School-sponsored after-school and summer programs in the Elmo and Turtle Lake tribal communities ensure that all children are included.



The Polson Partnership Project works with the Kootenai Cultural Committee, as well as the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, to promote cultural continuity for its Native children. According to Paul Coats, family nurse practitioner at the Tribal Health and Social Services:

The project serves as a key force to assist Native American children in coping and thriving within a predominantly non-Native school environment. This is accomplished via direct support given to Native students. The partnership staff provides tutoring, compassionate problem solving, and a safe, familiar environment for students to retreat into when problems arise. Beyond that, the partnership reaches out to students' family and home community to give support and services wherever needed. Support also comes in the form of advocacy, as the project partnership serves as an important liaison between Native and non-Native people within the schools and in the larger community.

For five years, fluent language speakers from the Kootenai community have taught Kootenai language in the two Polson elementary schools, as well as in the Head Start program, the reservation school, and at the Salish and Kootenai College. Kootenai language teacher Wayne McCoy explains the goal of the popular language program:

Our Kootenai language is on the brink of being lost to our future generations. Our traditions and heritage are something that the Kootenais cherish and would like to keep for our future generations, so that even the younger generation will teach their children and grandchildren in future years.

Through legends and storytelling, children learn the words that reflect the actual geography and history of the region. "They aren't learning Kootenai words to represent English words like calculator," Meeks says. "For example, McCoy often uses a watershed kit that includes maps of our lakes and rivers and puppets of our local animals made from beautiful materials. This makes it authentic to where we live and relevant to young children. We are building activities to enhance children's understanding through experiential learning."

Child and Family Partners

At the heart of PPP is the opportunity for children to form a positive relationship with a caring, responsive adult. Based on resiliency research that has identified caring and support as key protective factors for at-risk youngsters, child and family partners provide support and encouragement for children who are identified as needing individualized services. Working closely with Carew and with school counselors, partners serve as guides or pals to children, providing support and encouragement to children who are identified as needing individualized services, and forming strong relationships with families.

At the beginning of the year, teachers and project staff assess strengths and risk factors of all children and families as part of a Child Find process. After referral, mentors visit children's homes to work with families to assess goals and objectives, identify needs, and begin referral services to community agencies if needed.

"Becoming a 'resource guru' is an important part of the job," notes mentor Lori

Johnson. Parents play an active role in their child's goals and are encouraged to spend time in the classroom, on the playground, and in the after-school program.

"Unconditional, non-judgmental interactions and respect are essential in our relationships with children and families," Johnson says. In the elementary schools, mentors often spend time with children in the classroom, but they don't always interact with children. Johnson explains:

Just having someone pay attention—to know that someone is clearly out for them—is enough for some kids. Other kids don't feel comfortable with us in the classroom, so they visit us in the Family Resource Center. Girls love to come during recess. We play cards, visit, and talk. For some of our kids, especially our Native kids, the invitation to "Come and talk to me—the door's always open," isn't enough. There are still barriers. We have to move gently with kids. It often takes years to build relationships.

"Unconditional, non-judgmental interactions and respect are essential in our relationships with children and families."

In one classroom, Carew reports, "the whole group was in trouble—telling on each other, saying hurtful things. Children needed skills to better support themselves and each other." Carew explains:

As a classroom, we problem solve—we don't allow putdowns; we don't allow anyone to take all the power. We ask the kids, "How do you support yourself—emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually?" We might say, "Do you see how what you said affects her—how do you think it feels? How does this support him emotionally? What did you notice that happened differently?" They know and they are empowered by getting to figure it out.

Carew often incorporates traditions from her Native American culture in her work. In some classrooms, each child makes an identity shield. Each piece of the shield represents an aspect of the children's lives—their interests, their friends and family. When children say a kind thing, they attach it to feathers on the shield. "Children learn to recognize their own and their classmates' uniqueness and strengths, and

they become more aware of each others' feelings," notes Meeks. "We do a lot of looking at what kids say and creating activities to help children learn empathy, problem solving, and anger management," agrees Carew. "At the same time, we recognize and support teachers' skills in order to foster their self-efficacy and power."

Respecting families. Forming respectful relationships with families is as essential to the project's success as community collaboration and networking. Working with Native families, in particular, requires time for building trust and rapport. Former Cherry Valley partner Maggie Ryan explains:

Respect is a major part of Indian culture. White culture has not respected Native families and their strengths. There is an expectation that the dominant culture won't err on the side of caution. And because we do see strengths, trust begins to develop. We provide support, not judgment. There is a need to move in a gentle way. Many Native families have legitimate concerns for expression.

These principles guide the culturally responsive curriculum at Cherry Valley.

Building Cross-Cultural Bridges

Each child and family has a cultural identity, which can range from identification with traditional customs and beliefs to assimilation of mainstream culture and values.

Teacher acknowledges and affirms the unique cultural background of each child and family.

Teacher is knowledgeable of the historical context of represented cultures in the class.

Cultural artifacts, materials, and resources, including family and community members, are incorporated in the curriculum.

Native language instruction is offered, when available.

Culturally relevant learning activities are ongoing and integrated throughout the school year.

Parenting classes are offered through the Family Resource Center—a large, inviting room, filled with comfortable furniture, a coffee pot, and resources for parents to check out and take home. In classes and informal conversations with Carew, with teachers, and with child and family partners, parents learn positive techniques for encouragement, praise, and discipline, as well as conflict-resolution and problem-solving strategies.

Expanding the Culture of Inquiry

At Cherry Valley, professional development based primarily on individual and collective inquiry into teaching practices has helped to create, in Meeks's words, "a culture of inquiry and reflectivity focused on teaching, learning, and success for all." This culture has extended to the Polson Partnership Project. Teachers, child and family mentors, counselors, and all staff are asked to think about what they are doing and why, what's working, and what isn't.

The project offers training and support to all of Polson's elementary and middle school teachers through individual consultation and assistance regarding specific students and families, classroom presentations to address concerns such as impulse control or anger management, and professional development courses. Course topics have included resiliency, team building and group dynamics, critical feedback and communication skills, community collaboration, and cultural diversity. For example, in a course on the history of Native American schooling, an historical approach is



utilized. Carew, who draws upon her own Native American heritage in her work with children, families, and teachers, adds:

We talk about the boarding schools that were established to remove children from the cultural influences of community and family—where children were forbidden to speak their own languages. In order for non-Indian teachers to support Native children and their families, it is important for them to understand the very real historical baggage that many Native American parents bring to their interactions with schools.

Reducing relationship gaps. From the beginning, a primary goal of the project has been to help parents feel a sense of belonging to the school and to the larger community. In an annual report, Carew writes:

A team process has been developed at Cherry Valley whereby responsibility is shared for all aspects of the school community. This creates an atmosphere where children and their families feel a sense of trust, attachment, and a sense of belonging to the school, but to their community as well. When families feel support and encouragement from the school community, they will most likely feel attached to that community, practice the values it promotes, and their children will succeed academically and socially.

While the project offers intensive and personalized services to the neediest children and families, most activities include the entire school

"A major strength is the inclusive nature of our activities."

community. At the end of each year, the number of times that children and families participate in the project's many activities—child and family mentor program,

family fun nights, counseling, literacy fairs, parent-teacher conferences, and after-school pilot program—is tallied. The number consistently totals more than 3,500, a number that reflects the multiple times that many families participate.

"A major strength," Carew says, "is the inclusive nature of our activities." She continues:

We intentionally avoid creating a separate group of high-risk children. Every child and family benefits from the activities of the project. We reduce relationship gaps—between teachers and families, between classrooms, between the generations, and between the school and the community. And the mutual support means that ideas feed off each other.

Thoughtful planning and ongoing evaluation have contributed to the goal of an expanded concept of a learning community. Outcomes include:

- Increased student achievement
- Increased student attendance
- Improved student behavior
- Increased parent involvement in their children's education
- Increase in jobs held by parents
- Increased knowledge of drug, alcohol, and violence prevention
- Increase in parenting skills
- Increased family literacy
- Increased care for children receiving medical, nutritional, physical, and mental health services

While the project's flexibility encourages creativity and innovation and allows it to evolve to meet the needs of each school, there are a number of critical components that have contributed to the goal of an expanded concept of a learning community:

- By understanding the family, school, and community as systems that directly influence children's development, all faculty are better able to work together to build bridges between these environments. Collaboration with tribal health, educational, and social services has not only enhanced cultural continuity and service delivery for Native children, but has also led to the increasing role of the project as a liaison between the Native and non-Native people within the community. "The increased dialogue has led to a healing in the community," Carew says.
- While the project offers intensive and personalized services to the neediest children and families, most activities include the entire school community, and many include the larger community.

- Utilizing a team approach to decisionmaking and project implementation has encouraged shared leadership and responsibility.
- A focus on everyone's strengths has helped to change the culture of the participating schools from finger pointing to one of mutual support, respect, and appreciation among children, teachers, families, and the community.

Closing the Achievement Gap

And what about skills? Do basic skills suffer when schools move to a more meaning-centered approach to teaching? Standardized test scores did, in fact, decline slightly for two years while teachers worked on incorporating developmentally appropriate practices into their teaching repertoire. However, by 1995 the Iowa Test of

Basic Skills results showed Cherry Valley students consistently above both individual and school norms in reading, language, mathematics, and overall scores.

Although the school has not completely closed the achievement gap between its Native American and white children, it has made and continues to make substantial progress in reducing this gap, with 82 percent of Native students versus 89 percent of all students meeting the third-grade reading benchmark, as measured by Running Record assessments. Recent scores based on Running Record assessments showed that by spring of 2001, 95 percent of fourth-grade children were reading fifth-grade literature and social texts at 90 to 100 percent accuracy. Fifty of the 61 children who took the test were reading at the independent level—that is, with 95 to 100 percent



accuracy. In addition, when reading both social studies and literature selections, children self-corrected their own mistakes at a very high rate, demonstrating that they were reading for meaning rather than merely word calling.

In 2001, 65 percent of Native American students, compared with 73 percent of all students, were performing at the proficient or advanced levels on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, administered to all students in the fourth grade. These scores are particularly impressive when compared to national statistics on the educational achievement of Alaska Native and American Indian children, whose achievement levels continue to be low and who have one of the highest dropout rates of any minority group in the United States (St. Charles & Costantino, 2000).

Conclusion

Cherry Valley has implemented a comprehensive approach to professional development that includes a number of critical elements. First and foremost, they have created and, in Meeks's words, "plan to continue to develop a culture of inquiry and reflectivity focused on teaching, learning, and success for all." In this inclusive environment, the following practices play important roles:

- Individual and collective inquiry into teaching practices provides the foundation for changing beliefs and practices
- Time is provided for collaboration planning, discussion, visiting other schools, and peer mentoring
- A team process is utilized as the basis for decisionmaking



All of these activities play a part in maintaining a climate that supports resiliency for all, and keeps children at the center of school reform. Are the philosophical approach and the strategies used at Cherry Valley applicable to change efforts in other schools? Elaine Meeks believes that they are. Key to Cherry Valley's experience has been the sustained focus and continuity of leadership over a 13-year period. "The idea that principals should move to different schools every few years must change," says Meeks, adding:

Effective staff development and school reform are not just a matter of changing teaching practices. What we are doing is changing an entire culture. We need to reconceptualize the role of the building principal as an effective change agent, one who leads through example and helps to create the conditions that support continuous improvement.

Sustaining this environment requires constant monitoring of the match between what we say we believe and what we actually do. If we really believe it is the children's school, then we must keep their needs at the center. We can say we believe anything, but what we do had better illuminate what we believe. We have to keep taking it back to our philosophy—keep that out in front of us. This is key.

The result is a comprehensive literacy program that provides children with enjoyable and intellectually challenging activities that encourage active and engaged learning. Researchers have identified a number of characteristics of successful literacy programs, including explicit decoding and comprehension strategy instruction, collaborative learning and discussion of texts, writing with varying levels of support, and ample time for text reading—from independent reading to shared and guided reading (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). Classrooms at Cherry Valley offer a comprehensive mixture of all of these characteristics.

But classrooms at Cherry Valley offer more than a successful literacy program. The varied literacy activities provide multiple paths to meet the overall goal of the school's literacy program: "To ensure that all children become able readers, writers, speakers, and listeners, and are critical thinkers who can take responsibility for and direct their own lifetime of learning."

Integrating Students' Culture and Language Into the Curriculum: Unpacking the Canoe at Tulalip Elementary School

After the rumblings of the earthquake subside, teachers and students evacuate Tulalip Elementary School in Marysville, Washington, while administrators check to see that there is no damage to the building. Everyone is safe, and students, excited by this extra "recess," begin chatting, wiggling, jumping, and playing clap-and-rhyme games while trying to remain in their classroom lines. Surrounded by this commotion, one class of fourth- and fifth-graders stands out. Instead of giggling and gyrating, these kids are concentrating intently on their teacher, who is calling out words and phrases in the ancient language of Lushootseed.

"ey, s-YAH-yah," he prompts. Kids' hands shoot up. "Hello, friend!" a student responds. "us-CHAL chuwh," the teacher says. "How are you?" a student answers.

Eagerly, the youngsters volunteer English translations for words that were spoken for countless generations by the Tulalip Tribes that inhabited the evergreen forests and rocky beaches of East Puget Sound. The teacher even sneaks in a math problem, asking the students to estimate how long their arms and legs are in hweetl (a traditional Tulalip unit of measurement that is the distance from the middle finger to the thumb). Once again, nearly every hand shoots up to answer the question.

What is the reason for this high level of focus and engagement among 10- and 11-year-olds? What motivates these students to participate while their peers play? The students' interest is particularly surprising at this school, whose student population is two-thirds American Indian, a group that typically struggles for academic success. Yet, therein lies the clue. Research suggests that Native students often fail to thrive in school because of linguistic and cultural chasms between home and school (St. Charles & Costantino, 2000). In addition, social and economic stratification leads to rejection of schooling by some minority groups. When they see that schooling does not necessarily translate into social and economic gains, students may come to view schooling as detrimental to their own language, culture, and identity (Ogbu, 1993).

In contrast to America's long history of using schooling to assimilate Native Americans into dominant Western society, many Northwest Native American tribes and schools today are working to fold Native language and culture into the curriculum. In an effort to reduce discontinuity between home and school cultures and make learning relevant to students' identi-



ties as Native Americans, schools and tribes are collaborating on strategies ranging from Native language classes to fully integrated curricula in every subject. At Tulalip Elementary and in schools throughout the Marysville School District, collaboration with the Tribal Cultural Resources Department (TCRD) has resulted in a concerted effort to preserve and promote the tribe's language and culture.

The high interest in preserving and revitalizing cultural heritage was in evidence at the 2001 Native Languages and Cultures Conference in Spokane, Washington. There, more than a dozen Northwest tribes—Warm Springs, Coeur d'Alene, Nez Perce, and Salish Kootenai, to name a few—gave presentations, and many more tribes were represented in the audience. Language teachers discussed the many ways they are bringing their languages and cultures to the classroom, including songs, dances, and translations of popular children's books. The Tulalip Tribes and Tulalip Elementary School in the Marysville School District provide one example of a school where culture and curriculum are being integrated. Before returning to the story of this collaborative effort, we offer a brief discussion of the historical context of Native language preservation.

Revitalizing Native Languages

Due to a long history of colonization, armed struggle, and forced assimilation, many Native American cultures and languages have been lost (Van Hamme, 1996). From the 1850s through the 1960s, the United States forced many Native American children to attend boarding schools where their traditional languages and religions were banned. Native Americans still are feeling the effects of being raised in the environment of these boarding schools.

In 1990, the Native American Languages Act legitimized Native American cultures and languages and supported the rights of people to practice, promote, use, and develop their languages. But, as Jon Reyhner (1996) points out, while Native people now have the legal right to maintain their languages and cultures, they "lack what may be termed the effective right to save their languages and cultures" (p. 1). Unless effective methods are created and implemented, linguists estimate that more than 90 percent of the more than 6,000 languages in the world will be lost during the next century (see sidebar on Page 74). Not only does this represent a great loss to the world of "different ways of being, thinking, seeing, and acting" (Reyhner, 1996), but for Native people, language holds the key to survival of their cultural identity. Reyhner explains:

For the majority of young Natives today, cultures and languages, have, in fact, been separated. As a result, most of these young people are trying to "walk in two worlds," with only one language. This is a far more complex and stressful undertaking than the "two worlds" metaphor would suggest (p. 2).

According to a number of researchers (Yazzie, 2000), Native language and culture are important factors in Native American children's acquisition of knowledge and academic achievement. The Indian Nations at Risk Task Force (1991) found that:

...the perspective from which a school's curriculum is presented can significantly influence Native students' attitudes toward the school, schooling in general, and academic performance...schools that adjust their curriculum to accommodate the variety of cultures served are more successful than schools that do not (p. 16).

The Lushootseed language. Located about 40 miles north of Seattle, the 22,000-acre Tulalip Reservation sits on the shores of Puget Sound. Tulalip Elementary School sits on a bay overlooking Whidbey Island, with the Olympic Mountains rising in the distance to the west on a clear day. There are approximately 3,000 enrolled members of the Tulalip Tribes, which are made up of a number of smaller Puget Sound tribes, including the Snohomish, Stillaguamish, Skagit, and Skykomish. Major employers include the Tribe and its casino, and local fisheries and forestry industries.

Lushootseed was a common language among the Tulalip people. Much of the knowledge of Lushootseed, like several Native American languages, has been learned from tape recordings made by linguists and anthropologists in the 1950s and 1960s of elders telling stories and explaining cultural and spiritual practices. In the 1960s, Thomas Hess, a linguistics graduate student at the University of Washington, learned Lushootseed from a number of elders. Though some parts of the language had been written down since the 19th century, Hess developed a way to write Lushootseed using a variation of the International Phonetic Alphabet—a system of symbols used to record

every sound the human voice can make. Using the Lushootseed alphabet, Vi Hilbert of the Upper Skagit tribe transcribed and translated more than 100 hours of tapes of Lushootseed speakers. Hilbert has published several books of these stories and co-authored a Lushootseed dictionary and a book of place names.

A multifaceted approach. In 1992, there were only 17 elders of the Tulalip Tribes who spoke Lushootseed. It was shortly before that time that the tribe established a Tribal Cultural Resources Department (TCRD) to work to preserve, protect, and promote the tribe's language and culture.

Originally, the goal of the TCRD was to teach classroom teachers how to use a Lushootseed curriculum that they had developed, but the department found that most classroom teachers did not have the time to learn a new language as well as the curriculum. Instead, the department recruited and hired tribal members who could be trained as language teachers.

There are now about 10 employees, some of whom have worked in the department for as long as seven years. Since many of the language teachers had little knowledge of the Lushootseed language prior to their employment, language teachers receive training in the language in addition to training in language-learning theories and strategies. Two employees have associate's degrees and are working toward bachelor's degrees.

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The Lushootseed Language

Teacher David Cort developed a passion for the first language and culture of the Marysville area when he arrived in the Pacific Northwest. Below is an excerpt he wrote for the Tulalip Elementary School Web site:

Lushootseed is the native language of the east side of Puget Sound. Traditionally, Native people have spoken this language from Puyallup and Nisqually in the south to the Skagit River in the north. Many pressures have acted on Lushootseed to the point where it is now the native language of only a handful of elders. However, young people and some of their parents at tribal schools throughout the Puget Sound are learning this beautiful, ancient language as a second language. Many hope for a revival of Lushootseed so that it will once again be spoken as a first language by Native people of the Puget Sound.

The forces that have been so destructive to Lushootseed are typical of the forces operating against Native American languages in general, and in fact against minority languages throughout the world. The U.S. government attempted to eradicate the language through its boarding school policies beginning in the late 19th century. Children were separated from their families and taught at government boarding schools, where they were forbidden to speak their native language. Erosion of the language continued after World War II when young people returning to the reservation from military service tipped the scales in favor of English. The Tribal Council meetings at Tulalip began to be conducted in English after this point. By the 1960s, when Thom Hess began to work with Tulalip elders, most young people were no longer interested in the ancestral language. Cultural pride movements contributed to a resurgence of interest in Native languages, and a number of tribal language programs have developed during the past decades. But dominant-language media, such as television and the Internet, continue to erode the position of minority languages throughout the world.

Lushootseed is like the vast majority of small languages in the world that are struggling for survival. There are more than 6,000 languages in use today, but linguists estimate that more than 90 percent will be lost during the next century. These languages represent beauty and wisdom acquired by humanity over the course of countless generations, and their loss is a terrible loss for human culture. Take a small step to counteract the loss of diversity in our world: Begin to learn an endangered language. And if you live in the Puget Sound, there is no better language to learn than Lushootseed, the First Language of your home.

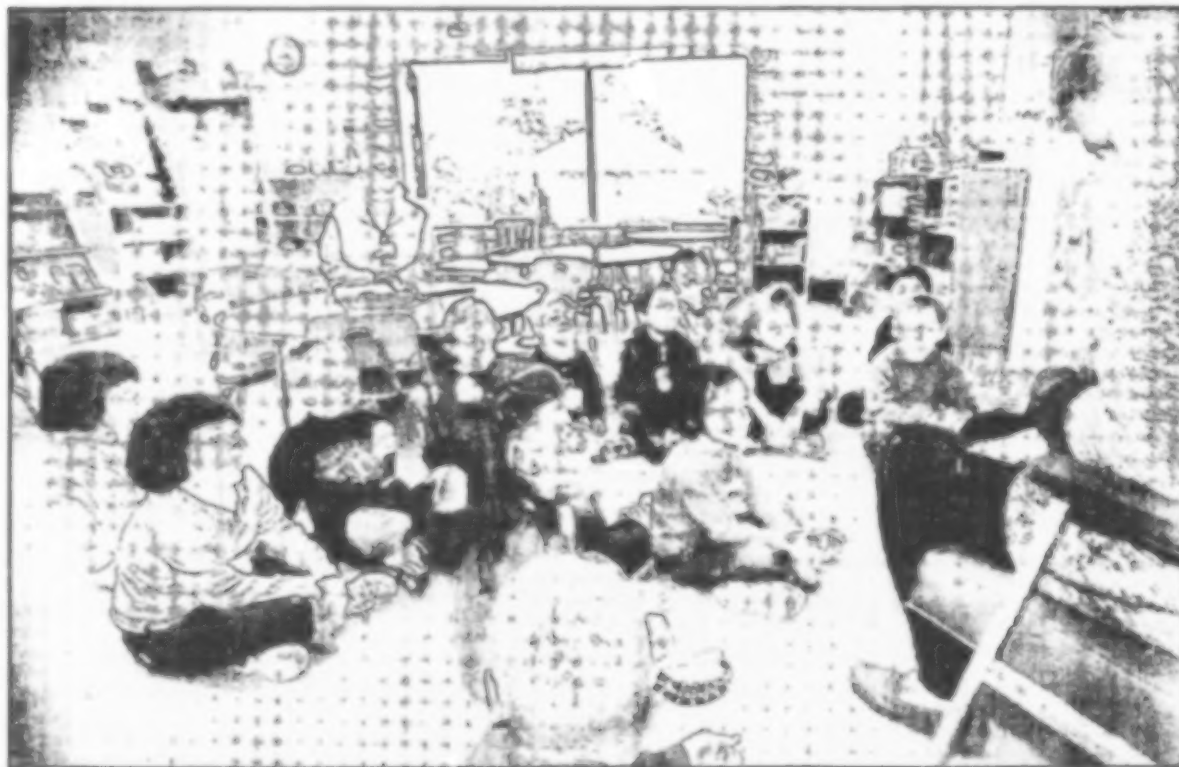
Source: David Cort, Tulalip Elementary Web site:
www.msvl.wednet.edu/elementary/tulalip/home.html

The Tulalip Tribes and the Marysville School District have begun a multifaceted approach that provides culture and language-learning opportunities at school and in the community. Specifically, this includes classes taught by TCRD teachers in preschool and the early grades; high school Lushootseed classes; elementary school classes that incorporate technology and Tulalip language and culture; language camps; language classes for community members; 10 quarters of college-level Lushootseed with credit given by Northwest Indian College; and other community events and activities.

TCRD language teachers lead daily 30- to 60-minute lessons in tribal preschool and Montessori classes, and some kindergarten through second-grade classrooms at Tulalip Elementary. Students in these classes learn the language primarily through having conversations, singing songs, and playing games. The language curriculum in the first and second

grades is being adapted to align with other projects and course content on which the class is working. Language teachers complement class projects on naming ceremonies and the nearby seashore habitat by teaching accompanying Lushootseed vocabulary.

David Cort, a teacher employed by the school district, is the school's Lushootseed and technology coordinator. He teaches Lushootseed 30 to 45 minutes per day in one third-grade through fifth-grade classroom and for three classes of sixth-graders through 12th-graders at the neighboring Heritage Secondary School. This is only the second year that Lushootseed has been taught at the high school level. The importance of including high school students became apparent when several graduates interested in becoming language instructors after receiving Lushootseed instruction in school applied for jobs at the TCRD. Cort also teaches technology classes to the elementary school



students, and has integrated Lushootseed into student technology projects. Currently, students are developing CD-ROMs that tell traditional Tulalip stories in English and Lushootseed, and computer games that teach Lushootseed and Tulalip geography.

A Tulalip-Based Classroom (TBC) in the fourth grade has been an option for Tulalip Elementary students in recent years when the school is able to hire needed staff. The classroom curriculum uses Tulalip language, literature, and culture to connect children with their culture and to satisfy state benchmarks. Lushootseed is not just taught as a second language; whenever possible, it is used as the language of instruction.

The TBC was a major outcome of a working document produced by a committee of tribal and school district staff who worked together for two years. Based on the premise that Native American children who feel positive about their culture perform better in school, the committee's vision was that Marysville schools would include more Tulalip language and culture in their curriculum. Cort worked with tribal language teacher Michele Balagot to develop the curriculum and teach the class in its first year.

The TCRD provides before-school classes for a few advanced high school students, who can earn high school foreign language credits that are accepted at universities. In a weeklong summer language camp, children can learn geography, sing songs, perform a play, and do other hands-on cultural activities. Language classes also are provided to community members. Four classroom teachers from Tulalip Elementary have taken a five-credit class so they can use the language in their classroom. One teacher explained, "I use Lushootseed every day; I want my students to see that I use it and value it."

Teaching Lushootseed in School

At the 2001 Native Languages and Cultures Conference in Spokane, there was general agreement on the importance of starting language instruction in early childhood, giving children more time to learn the language. In Suzanne Uberuagga's kindergarten through second-grade class, posters with pictures and Lushootseed words fill the walls. TCRD teachers Sonia Gobin and Becky Posey teach Lushootseed in this classroom for 30 minutes per day. The TCRD deliberately places two teachers in each classroom when possible so that they can talk to each other to model the spoken language.

Class starts by singing songs in Lushootseed. Little fingers crawl toward the sky as students sing "Itsy Bitsy Spider." In another song, students sing about holding family members in high respect and thanking them. The class has completed several units on verbs, body parts, and numbers. Today, Gobin and Posey hold up flash cards of rabbits, turtles, and birds, and students name the animal, and say what it is doing. Students then use these cards to play "Go Fish," speaking in Lushootseed. Next, students play bingo, their cards filled with the Lushootseed names for body parts like hands, arms, and legs. When asked what they like best about learning Lushootseed, the children mention the games and how they "feel smarter." Children also say that it will allow them to become language teachers, and that it honors their elders.

Similar activities occur in Cheryl Moll's first- and second-grade class, where TCRD teacher Natosha Gobin culminated a three-month study of the naming ceremony with a mock ceremony in which students were given animal nicknames and Moll was given an Indian name. Each child was responsible for a certain part of the ceremony.

ny, such as being a floor manager or witness who tells Lushootseed sayings. In preparing for the ceremony, several of Gobin's co-workers visited the class to talk about ceremonies. Gobin also told traditional stories in Lushootseed about animal names. To help students learn the language, she repeated unfamiliar words, phrases, and sentences in English when necessary. The repetition in Lushootseed stories also helped students to quickly learn the language.

Moll invites Gobin to attend other class activities, and the teachers meet regularly to plan and coordinate their lessons. Both teachers taught a unit on sea life at the same time, with Gobin teaching Lushootseed names for the animals and plants that students were learning about in English. The unit culminated in trips accompanied by both teachers to the Tulalip beach, Seattle Aquarium, and Woodland Park Zoo. Moll and Gobin have found that the Lushootseed classes help students to learn in other areas, by keeping them involved in class. Moll uses the Lushootseed she knows in other areas of the curriculum; for example, when reading a book in English, students also name familiar animals in Lushootseed, an activity they highly enjoy.

Gobin has also worked with the school's music teacher, Sara O'Conner. O'Conner asked Gobin if she and the students could practice the Lushootseed songs that Gobin was teaching them in music class. O'Conner subsequently had students sing Lushootseed songs at the school's winter concert and summer barbecue.

On the opposite side of the school, Cort's middle and high school classes from the neighboring Heritage School are understanding and following his commands to throw balls and Frisbees to each other, stand up and sit down, walk to a table or chair, open and close the door of the refrigerator, and pour a glass of soda and hand it to someone. And it's only the third week of school. Cort is using the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. TPR is an immersion



approach to language learning that was developed by James Asher, a psychologist and former associate dean at San Jose State University. It reduces stress on the learner's part by allowing students to be active learners while they first listen to the language, without producing it until they are ready. TPR relies on learners' preexisting knowledge of the world and uses gestures, actions, pictures, and objects to demonstrate another language in ways that students are able to comprehend (Cantoni, 1999).

"At first I wasn't sure if older students would be willing to go through the motions, but once I explained the rationale behind TPR, they

were all willing to participate," explains Cort. As the year progresses, Cort will use an extension of TPR called Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPR-S). TPR-S utilizes the vocabulary first taught using TPR by incorporating it into stories students hear, watch, act out, retell, revise, read, write, and rewrite (Cantoni, 1999). Stories also introduce additional vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

TPR is also used with elementary school students. When Cort visits the third-grade through fifth-grade class, he begins the TPR lesson by asking students: "Did you know that you only use half of your brain when you are learning? The left side of your brain likes words, reading, and writing. The right side likes movement and action. So we're going to find a way to use both sides together." The homeroom teacher also participates as students respond to whether or not they are hungry, and follow directions to choose a snack, place some food on a plate, and take it back to their desk to eat. Students also practice "hand TPR," making gestures while they practice the Lushootseed words for open, close, push, pick up, and so on.

In the past several years, Cort's emphasis has been primarily on teaching kids to speak Lushootseed, with the goal that children be able to tell a story that they have appropriately adapted for their own use. Students learn to recite stories together in Lushootseed. Eventually, they decide which story they would like to make their own, add their own changes to it, such as circular figures and repetition, and practice it in front of a wide array of audiences. But he is coming to believe that he needs to do more Lushootseed reading and writing instruction so that in the future, students can use the Lushootseed books that have been published to teach themselves Lushootseed if they wish (the primary method by which he has learned).

Lushootseed class involves more than learning vocabulary and grammar. Cort opens his classes by telling a Tulalip story. "It sets the tone of the class for students," he says. Bringing in Tulalip literature and culture, Cort discusses who the storyteller is and to whom she is related. He draws students' attention to the complex characters in each story, and the way that many characters exhibit certain qualities in several different stories. For example, today's story is about Mink, who tends to be a trickster. He asks students to predict what they think will happen in the story, based on what they know about the qualities of the characters from previous stories they have heard.

Teachers have seen several changes in the students as a result of their learning a second language. Learning a second language can be a metacognitive activity, stimulating thinking about language in both English and Lushootseed and increasing students' understanding of parts of speech and literary forms (such as the passive voice, which is preferred in Lushootseed but not in English). Young children learning the Lushootseed font have an increased awareness of phonics. Some researchers have found that studying a second language also enhances problem-solving skills, flexibility in thinking, creativity, and ability to see the world from different perspectives (Curtain, 1990).

Incorporating Literature and Culture: The Tulalip-Based Classroom

The Tulalip-Based Classroom's curriculum satisfies all state benchmarks, using Tulalip language, literature, and culture to do so. As Cort points out, it is a model that could be adapted for use with other languages, such as Spanish. The curriculum includes Tulalip con-

tent, such as reading Tulalip literature or counting in Lushootseed, as well as Tulalip cultural knowledge and ways of thinking, such as traditional storytelling form or methods of Tulalip measurement. This format aligns with Yazzie's (2000) assertion:

Culturally appropriate curriculum requires that educators implement culturally appropriate ways of teaching and learning throughout the entire day. This means that language is not taught only one hour a day, but it is taught and used throughout the entire school day. And it also means that aspects of cultural knowledge, such as Native history, science, philosophy, are all incorporated into what is taught in schools (pp. 17-18).

On the school's Web site, Cort explains the benefits of the Tulalip-Based Classroom:

Students will enjoy all the benefits of learning about our rich local culture, which will enhance the self-esteem and investment of Native students. The program will also increase the self-esteem and sense of place of non-Native students, as they develop a deep familiarity with the culture and first language of their home. In addition, students will gain the academic and cognitive advantages of learning a second language. Researchers have shown that studying a second language "can enhance problem-solving skills, creativity, and general cognitive development, and may even aid in sharpening Native language skills." The Marysville School District will also benefit from the Tulalip-Based Classroom (TBC). The classroom will be a remarkable example of cooperation between a school district and a tribe, enhancing the image of both. The class will also serve as a model for other culture-based classrooms within the school district. Immersion programs in Spanish or other languages could be developed using the TBC model. The tribe will also benefit as it provides the opportunity for tribal children to learn about Tulalip language and culture in their local school (www.msvl.wednet.edu/elementary/tulalip/home.html).



Several lesson plans, including how lessons are aligned with state benchmarks in reading, math, science, history, geography, music, health, and physical education, are described on the school's extensive Web site (www.msvl.wednet.edu/elementary/tulalip/home.html). The Web site also contains illustrated stories in both Lushootseed and English; biographies of storytellers; information about Tulalip "story poles"; Lushootseed words and phrases to read and hear; and information on Tulalip constellations, math concepts, and calendar.

Reading in the Tulalip-Based Classroom

The reading curriculum in the Tulalip-Based Classroom uses traditional Tulalip stories as its basis. These stories were made into books written in both Lushootseed and English. Students created the illustrations, modeled after the traditional Tulalip way of drawing

or carving, which was realistic and natural compared to the stylized art that is commonly associated with Northwest Native art.

In working through the stories with students, Cort explains that he spends minimal time on lower-order thinking skills and summarization, and more time asking students to predict,

apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. The curriculum emphasizes

Lushootseed forms in the stories such as repetition (repeating words or ideas over again) and "circular figures" (two ideas that are repeated in reverse order), which Cort says lend beauty to the story, as well as help listeners

remember the story better and attend to the patterns within it. Instruction also focuses on Tulalip ideas and beliefs behind storytelling. (See sidebar for Cort's description of Tulalip approaches to reading and story on Pages 82-83.)

The Tulalip stories are referred to when reading other literature, and Lushootseed is woven into the discussion. When Cort prepared to read aloud another chapter in Bernard Evslin's *The Adventures of Ulysses*, a children's adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* (which he introduced as "a European story from where my ancestors and some of your ancestors are from"), the class first reviewed what had happened in the story so far. Speaking in Lushootseed, Cort asked lots of guiding questions as they retold the story, and used stuffed toys as puppets to illustrate. Then, pairs of students compared the similarities and differences between the Cyclops in *Ulysses* and the Basket Lady, a figure in Tulalip

literature. The exercise helps students see connections between Native literature and other, predominantly Western, literature. Cleary and Peacock (1998) note the importance of this:

Teachers can help students see the meaning in the act of reading by providing them with meaningful texts, texts connected with their own experience, or by helping them find relevance in texts they must read by helping them search for the universals in human experience (p. 184).

More Than Content

In the Tulalip-Based Classroom, study focuses on students' local environment and community, thereby making learning relevant for them and building on their existing knowledge. Lessons often integrate several disciplines, such as science, history, and art. Traditional practices and beliefs are explored against the realities of current life. For example, a science unit focusing on the local saltwater ecosystem includes a study of fishermen and their families.

On the day of our observation, this emphasis on the local environment was exhibited in a multidisciplinary lesson incorporating health and science. Students began the lesson by reviewing what they had learned about the human digestive system, compared and contrasted it with the skeletal system, and compared the arm bones of a human with the forelimbs of an orca whale (the orca is Tulalip Elementary's school mascot, and is pictured on the Tulalip Tribes flag).

Cort then reviewed the strategy that he was going to ask students to use: application. Asked what "application" means, students responded "you have to read between the lines," "it's not in a book," and "you can use your prior knowledge." Students then applied what they knew about the skeletal system to make predictions

The exercise helps students see connections between Native literature and other, predominantly Western, literature.

about how the human and orca digestive systems might be similar and different. Before writing a paragraph on the topic, students discussed their thoughts in teams—a strategy frequently used in this class.

Helping students find connections between their lives and the curriculum is one way to reduce cultural discontinuities. Connecting activities to real purposes, for real audiences (Cleary & Peacock, 1998), and using teaching methods that encourage students to be active learners (Reyhner, 1992) are other ways to engage Native American students. Sheryl Fryberg, Marysville School District Indian Education coordinator, comments on results teachers have seen since changing their practices:

We found that attendance improved. Students were working harder; they were excited to work on their projects because it was project-based; and they were working on a real project in the real world. Test scores improved.

One example of such a real-world project is the creation of CD-ROM "talking books" of traditional Tulalip stories. The CD-ROMs were originally created by students for inclusion in a take-home packet for prekindergartners attending the kindergarten registration. Because the Tulalip Tribes have given each family in the tribe a computer, the CD-ROM is a software resource that provides young children at home with unique literacy and technology experiences. The project develops and applies students' skills in literacy, technology, art, language, and culture. Students learn to use Macromedia Flash 4, a widely used Web page design tool.

The CD-ROMs tell the stories in both English and Lushootseed, with both languages appearing side-by-side on the screen. When the user

clicks on a phrase, the student narrator recites the words. The students' enthusiasm for the project was apparent as they showed visitors the witty animation and sounds that they had created for the book's illustrations—spiders spinning webs and ants marching across the screen.

Listening to Families and the Community

Educators need a deep understanding of a culture to introduce a culturally responsive curriculum. Such understanding can best be attained by forging strong school-community relationships. Cort explains:

You earn parents' respect when you are repeatedly seen by them in the community, when you see them at community events. I attend the Indian arts festival, the powwows, the Treaty Days. Being willing to learn from the community that you're serving means a lot. I have found that this community is very willing to share.

For the last several years, Cort has taken a group of students to Hilbert's annual storytelling festival, where she invites Indians and non-Indians to "adopt" a story, song, or prayer and tell it. This year he also brought two students' grandmothers, who provided important guidance on how to be a respectful listener. "I've learned the most through the guidance of tribal members who have helped me to build better relationships with parents and kids," Cort says.

Feedback he received from another tribal member, for example, changed Cort's interactions with parents at parent-teacher conferences. He explains:

I used to have it in my head that I had to discuss the expectations, show them the child's portfolio, discuss their strengths and weaknesses, and I had

Teaching Reading Using Tulalip Literature

On the school's Web site, David Cort describes how the curriculum is designed to help students reach Washington benchmarks through the use of the Tulalip language and culture:

We will ensure that students in the Tulalip-Based Classroom are prepared to meet state benchmarks in reading, but we will teach to these standard benchmarks using our local first literature. Teachers will draw on the rich literary tradition of the Puget Sound for the reading texts that students will use to practice reading skills.

Teaching multicultural literacy: Special features of Tulalip literature. In addition to meeting the standard benchmarks we will also expose students to the special features of Tulalip literature that are not noted by the state. Some of these features are special to oral literatures, and so tend to be overlooked when developing reading standards. *Repetition* is one such feature. In many oral literatures, like Tulalip literature, the artful use of repetition not only lends beauty to a story; it also helps listeners remember the story better, and makes listeners attend to patterns in the story.

In Western literary tradition, repetition is often viewed as tedious, and so translators of Native stories sometimes condense action and leave out repetitions that they feel are unnecessary or tiresome for the audience. In the Tulalip-Based Classroom we will teach students to *value* repetition as a special feature of Tulalip stories, and so teach them to *recognize* and *appreciate* repetition.

Moving toward a Tulalip approach to reading. A further goal in the Tulalip-Based Classroom is not only to use Tulalip literature to advance the standard curriculum, but also to move toward a Tulalip *approach* to reading and story. It is one thing to include Lushootseed stories in our reading curriculum and use them to teach the skills required in the standard curriculum. I believe there is value in this, and that Puget Sound stories can form the basis of a strong reading curriculum that prepares students for the state benchmarks.

But that is not really learning to read in a *Lushootseed* way. We need to ask ourselves, what is the traditional Lushootseed way of "reading"? And since reading a *written* text was not a traditional skill, we need to expand and adapt our concept of reading. What was the traditional way an audience responded to a story? Why were stories told? Can we incorporate any of these elements into a Tulalip reading program? Does the story in such a program need to be presented orally?

Through discussions with staff at the Cultural Resources Department I have developed a list of some components we might need to include in a Tulalip-based reading curriculum:

- Readers need to learn to appreciate form in literature as well as content. This means we cannot present stories as a summary of events and omit repetition and circular figures. The formulaic features are an essential part of the Lushootseed story and may not be abridged.
- Traditional stories were told so that listeners would live their lives differently as a result of hearing the story.
- Traditional stories were told again and again, and readers developed deeper insights with each hearing. Thus, students need to be trained to patiently hold onto questions, realizing that answers come over a long period of time. In the traditional mindset, a listener is not deserving of knowledge simply because he or she wants to know the answer to a question.

Some thoughts on storytelling in the Tulalip-based classroom. If we are to move toward including a Tulalip approach to reading and story, it will mean wrestling with how to include traditional storytelling in the school environment. The traditional approach to story asks the audience to listen again and again to retellings of a story. One reason we have difficulty using this approach in school is because school follows the written tradition, and in the written tradition we read from a fixed text instead of orally retelling stories. A retelling is differently told or differently nuanced with each retelling, with each new occasion and audience. This makes the story fresh and new even though the audience has heard the story before. The audience is listening for and enjoying the fresh turns in each retelling. Repeatedly rereading a fixed text does not create the same type of experience for listeners. How can schools approximate the storytelling experience by providing a new, fresh experience for story retellings?

- **Change on the storyteller's part.** Changes on the storyteller's part can introduce novelty that will keep a retelling from becoming a wooden, boring repeat. After reading a story, the teacher may follow up by telling the story. Or the teacher may first tell the story, and then read it from a printed version. The teacher may tell different versions of the same story, so that students become aware that this story is part of a stream of various versions, passed on from the elders and flowing together to future generations. As teachers become familiar with many different versions of the story, they may earn the right to tell the story with fresh nuances or interesting details. This needs to be under the guidance of Native storytellers, because there is a danger in departing from the written text: the danger that the teacher will retell the story in an inauthentic way, and thus misrepresent the story.
- **Change on the audience's part.** The teacher can also introduce novelty in retellings of a story by creating fresh objectives and a new mindset for the audience. The teacher may ask the audience to listen for something different with each retelling. The teacher may ask the audience to focus on a different character with each telling, attempting to see the action from that character's point of view. Or the teacher can ask students to remember as much as they can of the speech of a certain character.

The teacher can ask the audience to focus on specific information with each retelling by providing "Listening Goals." For example, the teacher might tell the audience, "Listen for examples of repetition," or "Listen for references to water."

The teacher can give the audience the goal of remembering and retelling as much as they can of a certain section of the story. With subsequent retellings, the audience can be challenged to remember different sections.

The teacher can provide students with new information that enlightens an incident in the story and ask the audience [to] listen again to the story with this new information in mind. Students can discuss how their understanding of the incident changed during the second hearing.

An intricate story demands repeated hearings simply to make sense of it. So we can challenge students to listen carefully in order to understand a little more with each hearing; we can dare them to understand one section better with each hearing.

- **Different modes of reading.** The same story can be read in a variety of modes in order to preserve freshness. We do this already in our reading program. A student may hear a story read out loud by the teacher; then reread the same story silently to herself; then read the same story out loud with a partner; then read portions of the same story out loud to a partner while discussing story questions.

Source: Tulalip Elementary Web site, written by David Cort:
www.msvl.wednet.edu/elementary/tulalip/home.html

to do it all in 20 minutes. I thought I was pretty responsive to the parents' culture, but last year my student teacher Mike Sheldon, who is a Tulalip tribal member, really told me how that type of conferencing wasn't right, and it has made me change the way I do conferences. He told me that in his opinion the relationship between the teacher and the parent was the most important, that I needed to take long periods of time to build that relationship. So we talk about their family, who they are related to, fishing. Maybe we won't get to all the other stuff, but in this parent's opinion, that's OK. He said parents wanted a few strategies for how they could help at home. And he told me about the importance of having food, of having salmon dip and coffee for the parents. Parents feel more positively about the school because you've built that relationship.

The Tulalip Tribes and Marysville School District are working together on several other activities to build community understanding

and benefit students. One example is the fifth-grade graduation celebration. For this event, the tribe invited the school to hold the celebration in a longhouse. A tribal elder was the speaker, and others attended as tribal witnesses. Indian Education Coordinator Sheryl Fryberg describes the event and the community's response:

David Cort's class made a presentation, they put on a little play in Lushootseed and served food and sang some Lushootseed songs. It was so awesome. Everybody was just thrilled, because the language is starting, after all of these years, to come out really well.

Last winter an evening lecture series organized by the school district and tribe helped to provide information to the community about the history and culture of the Tulalip Tribes. Tribal speakers presented to about 100 people at each of the five lectures. Attendees included



Marysville Police Department and Snohomish County Police Department personnel, leaders and elders from the community, and local non-Native historians. The lectures were so popular that people were sad to see them end and are looking forward to another series this winter. Fryberg explained how the lecture series helped to preserve Tulalip culture and historical knowledge:

I think that there are a lot of people in our community that want to know more, but it's hard to find information. I mean, what you read in the newspapers isn't always true about people. We don't have a lot of information about our tribe in any kind of textbooks or anything like that. When you come to these lecture series you get to hear from the people about what their history was and what they're doing now, and the community really liked that.

Maintaining culturally responsive teaching is an ongoing process and a continual work in progress. Many Native language programs find that the way things are done in a school district is very different from the way things are done when working with elders in the community. Each setting has different factors and pressures that compete for its time. It is all too easy to, in the words of one language teacher, "use the language," but many Native Americans feel that instruction should help students to "live the language." Understanding the meanings and purposes behind stories and cultural knowledge is essential to ensure their proper use (see sidebar on Page 86).

Differing Perspectives on Language Preservation

"Every tribe is its own universe," states Toby Langen, director of the Lushootseed program at the Tribal Cultural Resources Department. "There is no one size that fits all when designing a language revitalization program," she

explains. In fact, there are many different perspectives held by tribal members in regard to how Native languages are written, recorded, spoken, and taught.

For example, not everyone thinks that stories should be recorded and written down, a practice that could aid in language instruction and help to preserve the language after fluent speakers die. Some believe that stories belong to the storyteller and their family. They worry that because the dominant culture has already taken so much of Native culture, it will take Native languages, too. One elder from a Northwest tribe explained: "My grandmother told me to not share my medicines and language with non-Indians. I don't want to, but we tape and videotape, and I hope it's never on the Internet." Another elder expressed her sentiments about writing down the language for others to read, saying, "We don't have to write it down; we listen and remember it."

Many tribes go through a process of deciding what their language should look and sound like. Fearing that the language will become altered, some tribes want to control the teaching of the language in order to preserve its integrity and authenticity. They rely upon elders to observe language classes and ensure that pronunciation and grammar are correct. Some tribes have decided to write their language in the Roman alphabet (the alphabet used in written English), as opposed to variations of the International Phonetic Alphabet used by the Tulalips and many others.

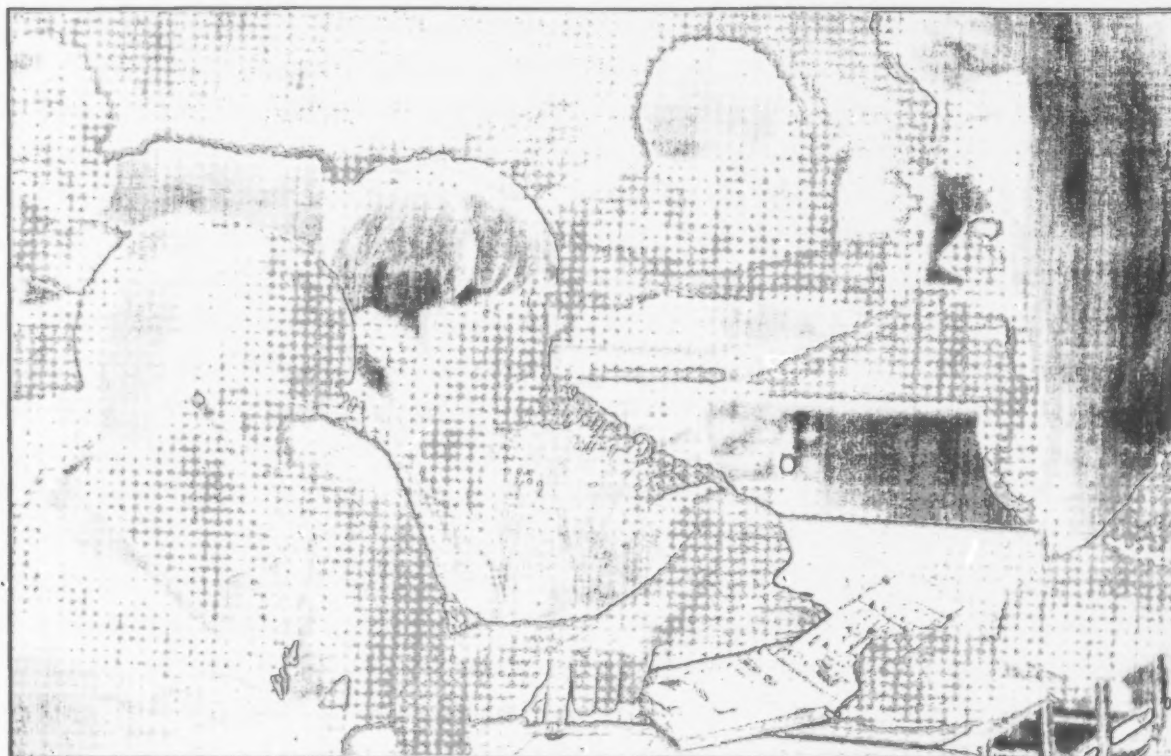
Some tribes find this alphabet to be more difficult to recognize and learn because of its symbols, accents, and apostrophes. Half the sounds in the Lushootseed language do not have English equivalents. It can also be difficult to read because of the unusual font, which includes letters with apostrophes and accents

Strengthening Indigenous Languages and Respecting Cultural Knowledge

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network was created to provide support for the integration of Alaska Native culture in the educational system. In addition to publishing the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, the network has published a number of guidelines, including Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages and Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge. Native educators from throughout the state contributed to the development of these guidelines. Each booklet of guidelines also includes recommendations and a list of reference material to assist educators, and can be found on the Web at www.ankn.uaf.edu. The following guidelines for educators are taken from the Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages:

Educators are responsible for providing a supportive learning environment that reinforces the wishes of the parents and community for the language learning of the students in their care. Professional educators can help strengthen the heritage language through the following actions:

- a. Make effective use of local expertise, especially Elders, as co-teachers whenever local language and cultural knowledge is being addressed in the curriculum.
- b. Make every effort to utilize locally relevant curriculum materials with which students can readily identify, including materials prepared by Native authors.
- c. Participate in local and regional immersion camps to learn the traditional language and cultural ways and their meaning in contemporary life.
- d. Obtain first- and second-language teaching endorsements (and/or A.A. and B.A. degrees) as provided by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and UAF [University of Alaska Fairbanks] and implement culturally-appropriate approaches to first- and second-language teaching in accordance with the language history and aspirations of the local community.
- e. Create an immersion environment to provide a natural context for language teaching and learning.
- f. Recognize and validate all aspects of the knowledge students bring with them and assist them in their ongoing quest for personal and cultural affirmation.
- g. Provide sufficient flexibility in scheduling Elder participation so they are able to fully share what they know and provide enough advance notice for them to make the necessary preparations.
- h. Align all subject matter with the *Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools* and develop curriculum models that are based on the local cultural and environmental experiences of the students.
- i. Provide assistance in instructional methodologies for heritage language teachers—language teaching doesn't always come naturally.
- j. For heritage language speakers, acquire reading and writing proficiency in the heritage language to serve as a model and to be able to assist students in developing their own literacy skills.



over them; letters written in superscript; and symbols such as the schwa (upside-down e); lambda (upside-down y); and a glottal stop that looks like a question mark without the dot under it. Stated one elder language teacher: "It's hard for me to read what the linguists have written down. When I teach, I like the students to write the way they hear it."

Another challenge is the lack of developed resources such as textbooks, tapes, and curriculum materials. Not only does it take a lot of time and effort to develop materials, but language teachers might also lack experience or knowledge of how to develop curriculum. In some communities, there are different opinions about the best methods for teaching Native languages. Explaining how the language was traditionally handed down through conversations, one elder explains, "It's hard to change from the way we were taught by our grandmothers."

Efforts to certify teachers of Native languages are underway throughout the Northwest states to improve the status and authority of Native language teachers within schools and classrooms. Some tribes are requiring prospective language teachers to obtain some background in curriculum development as they go through the certification process.

A shortage of fluent speakers is a major hurdle in many Native language revitalization programs. Without enough staff, schools' capacity to teach the language is hindered. Many language teachers are just learning the Native language themselves. Not all tribes that have language preservation programs have elders who speak the language, Langen explains. And elders may be reluctant or unable to participate in the program.

Langen acknowledges that some adults may feel conflicted about trying to learn their Native language. She says: "Language is your birthright. You wonder, why do you have to learn it? So there are some feelings of discomfort and injustice." Such feelings, in addition to the discomfort that some experience in a classroom setting, can make it difficult for adults to learn their Native language in a classroom setting.

Language in Real Contexts

To address the discomfort felt by community members in a classroom setting, the Tulalip Tribal Cultural Resources Department is developing a new project to bring the Lushootseed language into the "canoe family." This voluntary group of tribal adults and youth makes an annual journey, along with other coastal tribes, to visit a host tribe. There, the canoe family sings, dances, gives gifts, and feasts. They have even made a CD of traditional songs. This cultural and spiritual gathering based on traditional practices provides a natural opportunity for language learning and speaking.

Incorporating Native languages into regular activities is a strategy used by other tribal language departments as well. For example, the Yakama and Umatilla tribes have both used huckleberry picking and feasts as opportunities to teach Native words, songs, and stories revolving around foods and medicines. Cleary and Peacock (1998) assert that for Native languages to survive, communities and parents need to provide natural uses for tribal language in day-to-day life, and demonstrate its importance to young people. As Reyhner and Tennant (1995) state, "Social boundaries must be developed that give minority languages an exclusive role in traditional family and community social activities" (p. 283). At Tulalip Elementary, teachers are excited that some children are

teaching the Lushootseed they are learning to their parents. "Some parents are really involved in this and they ask questions about the language to teachers at school or when they see them in the community," says language teacher Natosha Gobin.

English-language media, particularly television and radio, compete for the attention of children and adults. In an effort to combat the dominance of English-language media, the Warm Springs Indian language program in Central Oregon has been providing language lessons several times a day on its radio station. The lessons—in Paiute, Wasco, and Sahaptin, the three Native languages originally spoken by tribal members—are also printed in the tribal newspaper. At Tulalip, several videos about the language and culture have been shown on the local community access channel. Students have worked on several of the professionally produced videos through a partnership developed by Lita Sheldon, Tribal Communications Director, with the local cable TV station. In the videos, students tell stories and teach Lushootseed. Students worked on the graphics with the tribal language department. In addition, one video was shot in a longhouse, with the children telling its history.

"It Is Important To Learn Our Language So We Know Who We Are"

It is often said that languages reflect the knowledge and wisdom of different peoples—knowledge and wisdom that can be lost when a language dies. "Languages have different sets of values," Langen points out. "For example, in Lushootseed you can say that your name is alive, that it has feelings and that you can hurt those feelings. That's something that you can't sufficiently explain in English."

The intense desire and dedication of many Native people to learn and pass on the language and culture are unmistakable. "Our language is our way of life," says one elder. "You have to know your language before you can know your tradition, your culture. It is spiritual. It is gifted [given to us]. It is important to learn our language so we know who we are." Says another, "We have nothing if our language has been taken."

Tulalip parents hope to someday be able to speak Lushootseed to their children. Describing parents' reaction to the new curriculum, Cort says that parents are very enthusiastic, and they enjoy seeing their kids learn the language. He believes that the Tulalip-Based Classroom has helped to improve the relationship between schools and Native American communities:

The community wants their kids to do well in school, and it values its language and culture. We have a responsibility to give that to them, especially

here at Tulalip because we are a part of this history where education has been used to take away culture and language. It's extra work, but it can be done and it should be done.

Diana Purser from the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe describes Native American communities' intention to maintain and revive their culture:

We want to maintain our culture. That is the bottom line. They've been trying to assimilate Native people for 200 years, and we have pretty much been assimilated in, I would say, 90 percent of our living styles. But there is a line drawn within all of our hearts that says we do want to maintain our culture and also restore some of the things that were totally stripped away from our grandparents. We are still in a cultural shock. We are still coming out of a cultural shock as a whole in all of Native American culture from the genocide effect that was thrust upon us in the 1850s. We are still feeling those reflections of that pain.



If we can get the school district or non-Natives to develop respect; to realize that, no, we are not going to be fully assimilated. To some extent, yes, but we do want to maintain our culture, we do want our language back, we want to have the same equal opportunities as everyone else, and we do not want to be exploited anymore. To have inclusion of our language in the school curriculum is one of our goals. Respect for our culture may start from the very thing that was taken—language. Students will have S'Klallam language as a credited subject.

Indian Education Coordinator Fryberg expressed her view that the educational system

**"The more they
feel comfortable
with themselves,
the easier it is
to engage them
in learning."**

should help Native American children to live and succeed in both the Native and non-Native worlds. She also stated that recognition as well as accurate and sensitive teaching of Native languages and cultures by schools can be one of the first steps in "healing" wounds

from the oppression, assimilation, and misunderstanding that Native American communities have experienced:

In order for our tribes and our people to continue to protect our sovereignty, our tribal rights, and our tribal lands, I think we need to have an education to compete in this world. And at the same time, I think it's crucial that the educational system is working with the tribes and the community to be teaching the culture and the language. There's a fear that it was in the educational system that those things were lost. So it's through the educational system that we need to bring those things back into our community and start healing our community that way.

Language teachers comment on how learning about Native culture motivates Native students. They mention specific students whose behavior and grades improved after their culture became part of the curriculum. Fryberg explains, "I think there's some more respect there, and I know the kids are engaged in what they're doing." Dawn Smith, principal of Warm Springs Elementary, credits the inclusion of language and culture with improving students' self-esteem. "In the past several years, we've seen how the more the kids believe in themselves and their abilities, the more they feel comfortable with themselves, the easier it is to engage them in learning," she remarks (Briggs & Carter, 2001).

When describing the changes he has seen in children since the new curriculum was implemented, Cort states enthusiastically, "Kids love learning about their culture. They feel pride; they see themselves as leaders. Culture motivates them to learn and to teach other kids."

Conclusion

At Tulalip Elementary, teachers understand that integrating the languages and cultures of their students into the curriculum motivates students and helps them to see the connections between their lives and education. Teacher David Cort recognizes the unique cultural perspectives about literacy that his Native American students bring to the classroom. He uses these perspectives to both affirm students' knowledge and background, and as a basis for an understanding of the values and skills required by the dominant culture.

Decades ago, when Lushootseed speaker Susie Sampson Peter was telling stories for recording by anthropologist Leon Metcalf, she referred to the tape recorder as her "new canoe."

Comments Cort, "She was packing the canoe with treasures, and now we are unpacking it."

Because American schools have a long history of denying Native American children their language and culture, they have a special role (some would say, a responsibility) to help reverse this loss. And in helping to restore these cultural treasures, schools will likely improve the academic achievement of Native American students as well (Reyhner, 2001; Demmert, 2001). As Cleary and Peacock (1998) put it, "Schools that acknowledge, accept, and teach a child's cultural heritage have significantly better success in educating students" (p. 108).

Conclusion

Every child has the right to feel included. Every child has the right to have the opportunity to feel inclusive of others. This must happen day after day, lesson after lesson (Morefield, 1998).

As these schools, and many others across the country, illustrate, we know a lot about what makes schools successful for all children. We began this paper with the five High-Performing Learning Community (HPLC) principles for creating high-performing and equitable schools: a shared vision, challenging curriculum and engaged student learning, supportive organizational structure, collaborative learning community, and proactive community relations. These principles are clearly evident in the philosophy and practices of the four schools profiled here.

When we examine the school profiles, a number of themes emerge. Most important, a safe, supportive, caring environment that provides multiple opportunities for building strong relationships with caring adults provides the foundation for all children's healthy development. For children who may be at risk for underachievement, such an environment is even more critical. For that reason, this is the first of our seven interdependent themes:

- **A safe, responsive environment that provides multiple opportunities for building strong relationships with caring adults.**

"The most important thing is for children to feel valued, important, and loved," says Helen Gordon Child Development Center teacher Amy Jacobson. A warm, welcoming, aesthetically pleasing environment, where children's artwork, writing, photographs of children, and other projects are prominently displayed, tells children that they and their work are valued.

Cherry Valley's child and family partners, home visitors at Whittier Elementary, and the faculty at all the schools take time to listen carefully to children, to respond sensitively, to know each child and her family individually, and to understand, respect, and build upon children's unique cultural background.

Teachers understand that if children are to learn to take responsibility for their behavior, teachers need to help children to imagine how others think and feel. They know that understanding the child's point of view is critical for providing individualized and differentiated learning opportunities. Cherry

Valley Principal Elaine Meeks says, "As a faculty, we make decisions based on a key question: Through the eyes of each child, how do we want our school to be?"

- **Strong, supportive, and shared leadership.**

High expectations for children, teachers, and families can become overwhelming without the resources and support to reach goals. Finding additional resources through tenacious pursuit of public and private grants has become a necessity in today's schools, where funding often declines as accountability increases. Principals who help procure additional resources, who lead by example, who nurture relationships and leadership within the school, and who encourage teachers to examine teaching and learning in a risk-free environment help to create a collaborative learning community. In this environment, teachers are asked to examine and articulate their own values, theories, and practices, moving from, "That's the way we've always done it," to in-depth study and research into teaching practices.

Meeks explains how she initiated an inquiry-based professional development model by observing in classrooms and asking questions: "I wasn't standing there with a clipboard checking items on a list. I was asking teachers why they do things the way they do. It's incredibly powerful for teachers to be reflective about their practices."

- **Ongoing opportunities for faculty to engage in collaborative learning and reflecting.** Organizational structures that support ongoing opportunities for faculty to share expertise, questions, concerns, and information from workshops and book study ensure that everyone is both learner and teacher. When schools use such an integrated, comprehensive approach to school change, new practices and innovations

enrich and support each other, rather than being "just one more thing." New knowledge and skills are worked on until they are strong enough to provide a building block for future innovations.

The result is a sense of shared vision and shared responsibility for children, even before they become students at the school. Cherry Valley's Little Cherries and Cherry Blossoms are an integral part of the school community. Whittier Principal Jackie Ramirez explains why they focus a lot of effort on the preschool children in their community: "These will be our kids."

- **A challenging curriculum, with multiple pathways to success.** There is a strong consensus that engaging and challenging learning situations that develop indepth understanding are essential for real learning to take place. By building on and expanding on the experiences that children bring to school, teachers not only help children see the connections between learning at school and at home, they help them feel valued and supported.

Because learners move through multiple stages of development in their journey to proficiency in literacy, teachers need assessment tools to monitor children's progress at benchmark points (Leslie & Caldwell, 2001). Authentic assessments that reflect the child's performance during typical activities in the classroom provide a comprehensive picture of children's learning and development. Classroom assessments provide valuable information to share with parents, and they provide information to individualize and improve instruction.

Neuman and Celano (2001) concluded that in addition to changes in classroom practice, "a second and more dramatic accommoda-

tion is to broaden our definition of literacy from one that is school bound to one that is more situation based. Strategies for learning about literacy need to be tied to real, authentic activity that is better connected to the more context-based problems and techniques of practical life" (p. 24). In these Northwest schools, literacy is defined broadly, to include emotional and aesthetic literacy. Art, music, drama, technology, and poetry are woven into the daily life of the classroom.

At Whittier, the Schoolwide Enrichment Model supports the development of higher-order thinking skills, while at the same time, nurtures multiple intelligences and provides multiple avenues for success. According to Principal Ramirez:

The enrichment model makes them look at life differently, see problems differently, and interact with the community in a different way. We look at where kids are, what we have to offer, and what we need to provide for them to be successful—Boy and Girl Scouts, field trips, music, art, dance, chess, basketball, drama, cooking, doll making, and auto mechanics. They learn different languages, different ways to express themselves.

- **Developing language and literacy throughout the day for authentic purposes.**

Braunger and Lewis (1997) concluded that, "learning to read is about access" (p. 61).

In order to be confident and competent readers, writers, and speakers, children need access to many rich and varied experiences with language and literacy. In these schools, as in all schools that promote high levels of language and literacy, children use language creatively—in songs, stories, and wordplay. They write in journals and to pen pals; interview and write about nursing home residents; present their stories to their class-

mates, and in some cases, to the community; engage in lively group discussions and extended conversations; act out stories, write, illustrate, and publish books. They may learn in two languages, as children do in Whittier, and make "talking books" in an effort to revitalize a nearly extinct indigenous language, as the fourth-graders do at Tulalip Elementary.

Bookshelves spill over with hundreds of high-quality books (that reflect the cultures in the classroom), visually engaging and rich with expressive language. Multiple opportunities for listening to stories and informational texts, to read with a friend, with the teacher, and independently build print knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonics knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and vocabulary. Explicit instruction in decoding and comprehension strategies ensures that children read with fluency and understanding. Teachers demonstrate in a wide variety of ways that, in Whittier teacher Cynthia Chase-Spilman's words, "Reading is elegant, valuable, respectful, and downright fun!"

Finally, and importantly, teachers use reading and writing to identify and express thoughts and feelings. Steve Franzel, a teacher at Helen Gordon Child Development Center, points out, "Language becomes a way to support children's power—their ability to deal with a peer, with conflict, with sad or scary feelings. Words empower them to express themselves—to handle life." Reading and writing offer a powerful way to connect children's emotions and background experiences with text, thereby engaging young readers and integrating higher-level comprehension skills.

- **Culturally responsive environments.** In the learning communities described here, teachers bridge the gap between home and school by understanding, acknowledging, and nurturing the knowledge and background experience of children and their families. Culturally responsive teaching is a perspective that is integrated into the daily activities of the classroom. Books, songs, stories, poetry, and art from a variety of cultures (especially the cultures that make up the classroom) help to ensure that all children feel, "This is my school. I belong here." "Every child has the right to feel included. Every child has the right to have the opportunity to feel inclusive of others. This must happen day after day, lesson after lesson," says Washington educator John Morefield (1998).

Home languages are valued and supported, rather than seen as a problem to be remediated. Whittier teacher Cynthia Chase-Spilman explains: "By knowing two languages, children will have a huge asset. They will read and write and think in two languages." For Tulalip teacher David Cort, recognizing the unique cultural perspectives about literacy of his Native American students means more than using Tulalip stories as reading texts. Students study and appreciate cultural approaches to reading a story, special features of Tulalip literature, traditional storytelling form, and the purposes of storytelling. "Kids love learning about their culture," says Cort. "They feel pride in themselves as leaders. Culture motivates them to learn and to teach other kids."

- **Strong partnerships with families and the community.** Whittier Principal Ramirez sums up these schools' deceptively simple approach to family engagement: deliver and communicate on parents' terms. Whittier's home visitors, Cherry Valley's child and

family partners, and teachers at all the schools take time to build relationships with families, helping them access needed resources, and reinforcing their vital role as their child's first teacher. Family fun nights, traveling books, early intervention for preschoolers, kindergarten packets, authors' parties, frequent positive phone calls, and newsletters help families feel informed and included.

Learning is not a one-way street. "Being willing to learn from the community that you're serving means a lot. I have found that this community has a lot to share. I've learned the most through the guidance of tribal members who have helped me to build better relationships with parents and kids," says Tulalip teacher David Cort.

Connecting with families and the communities in which they live means that teachers get to know more about their students' culture, background, and experience. And as Cort points out, "You earn parents' respect when you are repeatedly seen by them in the community." By supporting these ever-widening circles of inclusion, schools help to ensure that each child has the support they need for healthy development and optimal learning. Cherry Valley social worker Co Carew observes that their collaboration with the tribal health, educational, and social services, "has not only enhanced cultural continuity and service delivery for Native children. The increased dialogue has led to a healing in the whole community."

The Moral Purpose of Education

For education to make a difference in the lives of children, "developing mutual empathy and relationships across diverse groups is critical," says internationally known educational reform

researcher Michael Fullan (p. 2). Education, he writes, has a moral purpose:

At the micro level, moral purpose in education means making a difference in the life-chances of all students—more of a difference for the disadvantaged because they have further to go. At the macro level, moral purpose is education's contribution to societal development and democracy. A strong public school system is the key to social, political, and economic renewal of society (Fullan, 1999, p. 1).

Narrow, culturally biased definitions of “readiness,” “giftedness,” and school success track and label children; low expectations restrict their opportunities and ability to learn. Schools, informed by families and the community, are broadening their definitions of learning and school success, enhancing the quality of life for all concerned. The practices of these four schools illustrate the many ways that schools and classrooms can be orchestrated to effectively and lovingly lead children into literacy—oral, written, emotional, cultural, and aesthetic.



Appendix: Children's Literature Web Sites

The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil. (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Let us put our minds together, and see what life we will make for our children. (Tatanka Iotanka, known as Sitting Bull)

Reading aloud and discussing stories are some of the best ways for children to build vocabulary and conceptual knowledge, enhance memory, imagination, attention span, listening, and comprehension skills. Listed below are a few of the many picture books that can spur rich conversations about such themes as intergenerational relationships, courage, friendship, overcoming adversity, prejudice, grief, rejection, and cultural diversity. Because author studies are a wonderful way for both students and teachers to learn about the many new authors and illustrators, as well as old favorites, we have arranged the following sites by author. Kathy Short, Associate Professor of Language, Reading, and Culture at the University of Arizona, writes about the many benefits of author studies:

When engaging in author studies, children hear about the lives of favorite authors and illustrators. They also learn about their writing and illustrating

strategies and look at connections among their books. When authors become "real," children are more likely to critique the books they read. When they visit the library, instead of feeling overwhelmed by the volume of books, children can look for books by authors and illustrators who have become their friends. And, once children are familiar with an author's work, they easily comprehend other books by that author. Author studies expand choices, giving students the opportunity to learn about strategies that they can use in their reading, writing, and illustrating (1997, p. 51).

In addition to popular children's authors, such as Maurice Sendak, E. B. White, Leo Lionni, and Eric Carle, whose books are enjoyed in classrooms throughout the country, we recommend a few of our favorite authors. But don't stop here. Find your favorite search engine, type in the names of your favorite authors, and enjoy your virtual tour!

Children's Authors Web Sites

Verna Aardema was born in 1911 and spent hours as a child making up stories and telling them to children in the cypress swamp near her home. Aardema thoroughly researched her African folktales, exploring the customs and traditions from which the stories emerged. On this site you will find biographies, book reviews and descriptions, and lesson plans for books, including *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain: A Nandi Tale*, *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears: A West African Tale*, and *Who's in Rabbit's House? A Masai Tale*.
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/aardema.htm>

Joseph Bruchac is a poet, storyteller, and publisher who has received many literary honors, including the American Book Award and the PEN Syndicated Fiction Award. Bruchac was raised by Abenaki Indian and Slovak grandparents in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York. His reverence for Native American stories, legends, and songs was sparked by the stories of his Abenaki grandfather and his old friends. This site includes a biography and a list of his books, including *Between Earth & Sky: Legends of Native American Sacred Places*, *A Boy Called Slow: The True Story of Sitting Bull*, and *Sacajawea, a Novel*.
www.josephbruchac.com

Born in Northern Ireland in 1928, **Eve Bunting** emigrated to the US in 1959. She started writing her own stories as a child and read and discussed them with her father. She has published more than 130 children's books, some under the names of Evelyn Bolton or A.E. Bunting. Her picture books offer children's views of real-world issues and the complex feelings faced by them and their families. On this

site there are biographies, interviews, and lesson plans for some of her many books, including *Smoky Night*, *Fly Away Home*, and *Dandelions*.
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/bunting.htm>

As a child, **Sherry Garland**, a fifth-generation Texan and daughter of a tenant farmer, loved to make up stories to tell her mother. She writes nonfiction, historical novels, and a number of picture books about other cultures, including *The Lotus Seed*, *My Father's Boat*, and *Voices of the Alamo*. "Today," writes Garland, "I continue to write about loners who are different but triumph over adversity. Whether my books are set in the mountains of Vietnam or the cotton fields of Texas, in modern cities or ancient villages, writing is satisfying to me—it's like telling my mother a story." This site includes biographies, a list of books, frequently asked questions and answers, and writing tips.
www.swiftsite.com/sherrygarland

From an early age, Jacob, known to the world as **Ezra Jack Keats**, was interested in art. But it wasn't until 1954, at the age of 38 that he illustrated his first children's book, *Jubilant for Sure* by Elizabeth Hubbard Lansing. In the 11 years that followed, Keats wrote and illustrated 54 books, including many books that feature minority children as central characters. Peter, an African American child, made his first appearance in the Caldecott Medal winner *The Snowy Day*, and is the hero of six additional books, including *Whistle for Willie* and *Peter's Chair*. This Web site is the sole repository for the Ezra Jack Keats Archive, and includes manuscripts, personal papers, a biography, the making of a Keats' picture book, and activities for using Keats across the curriculum.
www.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/keats/main.html

Dayal Kaur Khalsa (1943–1989) knew that she was dying when she wrote and illustrated all but one of her nine picture books, based mainly on her own childhood experiences. Her richly detailed illustrations, marked by bright colors and strong shapes often are based on paintings by famous artists. Visit this site for a virtual exhibition of the National Library of Canada's tribute to Khalsa. It offers a biography, opportunities to study her work method, and views of the original illustrations contained in her books, including *Tales of a Gambling Grandma*, *The Snow Cat*, and *Julian*.
www.nlc-bnc.ca/3/7/index-e.html

Mem Fox was born Merriam Frances Partridge in 1946 in Melbourne, Australia, and grew up with her missionary parents in Zimbabwe. Fox is both a teacher and a great storyteller, and Australian settings and characters are featured in all 29 of her children's books. The books use rhythm, rhyme, and repetition to bring home specific themes to young readers. Her site includes an autobiography, the stories behind some of her best-known books, including *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, *Hattie and the Fox*, and *Koala Lou*, and tips for parents, teachers, and writers.
www.memfox.net

Born in 1952, the child of Palestinian and American parents, and raised in Missouri, Texas, and Israel, author and editor **Naomi Shihab Nye** brings a cross-cultural perspective to her books of fiction and poetry for children. Her poetry captures everyday moments that mirror cultural identity and heritage and her compilations of poetry capture the flavor of life in Mexico and the Middle East. This site, entitled *Voices from the Gaps: Women Writers of Color* features a biography, a list of books (including *Sitti's Secret*, *The Tree Is Older Than You Are*, and *The Space Between Our Footsteps*), and links to related sites.

<http://voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/NaomiShihabNye.html>

"When you write, keep the stories small and close to your heart. When you get too far away from your heart, you can't find your way back..." This is **Patricia Polacco's** advice to young writers and this idea of writing from the heart is apparent in all of her stories and illustrations. Born in 1944 in Lansing, Michigan, Polacco credits her Babushka for much of her inspiration, and says that many of her characters embody the best qualities of her grandmother. This site includes a biography, lesson plans for some of her books, and a link to her home page (www.patriciapolacco.com), where you will find descriptions of her books, including *The Keeping Quilt*, *Pink and Say*, and *Thank You, Mr. Falker*.
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/polacco.htm>

Beatrix Potter (1866–1943) wrote, drew, farmed, and raised sheep in England. Her love of gardens, plants, and animals is evident on every page of her timeless stories of animals' plights and resolutions. She wrote more than 27 books, which have sold 100 million copies since 1984. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, first published in England in 1902 has been reprinted more than 250 times and translated into 35 languages. Enter this site to meet Peter Rabbit and his friends, to learn about Potter—her life and art—and to hear and read the stories of *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, and *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*.
www.peterrabbit.co.uk

Author and artist **Faith Ringgold** is best known for her textile arts, painted quilts that tell stories of heroes of black history and culture. The children in her books fly, talk to paintings, and dance at the Louvre. Ringgold was born in 1930 and grew up in Harlem. This site includes a biography, a discussion of racial issues, and

detailed descriptions of her books, including *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*, *Tar Beach*, and *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks*.

www.faihringgold.com

Many of **Cynthia Rylant's** more than 50 books for children and young adult readers are set in her native Appalachia where she was born in 1954. In spare, lyrical language she speaks of the interconnectedness of all living things, the importance of family, and the need to belong. A biography and a list of books, including the Caldecott winners *When I Was Young in the Mountains* and *The Relatives Came*, and *Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds*, can be found at this site.

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/rylant.htm>

Author/illustrator **Allen Say** was born in Japan in 1937. He was 12 years old when his parents divorced and he went to live with his grandmother in Tokyo. He sought out an artist as a mentor and surrogate father and began to develop the art that would lead to more than a dozen lovely and award-winning children's books. According to this Web site, Say's books contain a variety of themes but, above all, his work is autobiographical. He writes of journeys, respect for the environment, the importance of family, the love of creating art and, most often, the contrast between Asian and American cultures, and the bridging of those cultures. The site provides a biography, an interview with the author, activities to use with his books, book reviews by children, and descriptions of his books, including *Grandfather's Journey*, *Tree of Cranes*, and *Emma's Rug*.

www.eduplace.com/rdg/author/say

In 1968, **William Steig**, the popular *New Yorker* cartoonist, wrote and illustrated his first children's book at the age of 61, a letter-puzzle book entitled *CDB! Roland the Minstrel Pig* quickly followed, and his third title, considered his masterpiece, was Caldecott Medal winner *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*. A prolific author who populates his stories with animals, Steig's humorous books celebrate the "abundant world of nature, the security of home and family, the importance of friendship, the strength that comes from self-reliance."

www.williamsteig.com

Past President of the Science Fiction Writers of America, **Jane Yolen** is the author of more than 200 books for children ranging from science fiction and fantasy to poetry and folktales. *Network* has called her the "Hans Christian Andersen of America." Yolen was born in 1939 in New York City. When asked where she gets her ideas, she responded: "That is a very difficult question to answer, since I get my ideas from everywhere: from things I hear and things I see, from books and songs and newspapers and paintings and conversations—and even from dreams. The storyteller in me asks: what if? And when I try to answer that, a story begins." A biography in pictures, descriptions of her books and poetry (including *Encounter*, Caldecott winner *Owl Moon*, and *Not One Damsel in Distress: World Folktales for Strong Girls*), and frequently asked questions are found on this site.

www.janeyolen.com

Born in 1915 in Norfolk, Virginia, **Charlotte Zolotow** is an educator, editor, and prolific writer of children's books. Ninety of her children's books are available through on-line book services. A series of family moves, ill health, and a shy personality made it difficult for Zolotow to make friends and to feel like she

belonged. She used writing as a way to express her feelings and ideas and never forgot the challenges and feelings that plagued her as a child. Zolotow maintained that while adults have learned to cover up feelings better, these feelings are real for them and they are real for kids. The importance of feeling and spirit come through in her writings, whether the topic is nature, family, or neighborhoods. This site includes a biography, frequently asked questions, activities for literature-based learning, and descriptions of her many books, including *Over and Over*, *My Grandson Lew*, *William's Doll*, and *The Hating Book*.
www.charlottezolotow.com

Award-Winning Books

The University of Saskatchewan Education Library Guide offers a complete list of Newbery and Caldecott Medal winners. The John Newbery Medal was established in 1922, and is presented annually to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published in the United States in the preceding year. The Randolph Caldecott Medal, established in 1938 is presented annually to the illustrator of the most distinguished American picture book for children published in the United States in the preceding year.
<http://library.usask.ca/education/newbery.html>

The *Horn Book Magazine* Web site includes a sample of indepth reviews of the newest and best books for children and young adults that appear in their bimonthly magazine.
www.hbook.com/mag.shtml

Part of the Internet School Library Media Center (<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/index.html>), the **Children's Literature and Languages Arts** index page focuses on children's literature in education. It includes a database of award-winning children's literature, book and media reviews, authors and illustrators, biographies, information on various genres, literacy enrichment activities, and links to other children's literature sites.
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/childlit.htm>

The **Coretta Scott King Award** is presented annually by the Coretta Scott King Task Force of the American Library Association's Social Responsibilities Round Table. Winners and Honor Books from 1997 to the present are annotated, with a display of the cover. Information on submitting titles also is provided.
www.ala.org/srrt/csking/index.html

Multicultural Web Sites

Children's feelings about their classrooms significantly influence learning and also have an impact on their relationships with teachers and peers. When curriculum and materials are examined from a variety of cultural perspectives and these perspectives are valued and validated in the classroom, children feel an integral part of the learning community. Materials that accurately reflect the contributions of the student's own people and language enhance the child's image of self and family and lead to a more meaningful learning experience. As children become more engaged with subject matter through collaboration with peers and inquiry into important ideas, there is an increase in confidence and competence. The following Web sites include information, instructional plans, and literature that will help teachers to bring cultural connections into the curriculum.

General Multicultural Sites: Curriculum and Materials

Arts Edge: John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

The Teaching Materials section will be especially useful for teachers. There are teaching units that include African American Arts and Culture, Mexican Culture, African Contributions to American Music (Jazz, Swing, etc.), Geography of China, biographical units on Marian Anderson, Harriet Tubman, Native American heroes, etc. Instructional components are divided by grade level (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) with some units that span all grade levels. <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>

Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) at the University of California at Santa Cruz

This site provides many resources for understanding issues and learning about best practices in multicultural education. www.crede.ucsc.edu

Electronic Magazine of Multicultural Education

This is an online magazine for scholars, practitioners, and students of multicultural education. It is theme oriented with each issue containing articles, instructional ideas, reviews of children's and young adult literature, professional books, videos, and links. www.eastern.edu/publications/emme

The Global Schoolhouse

This is a highly interactive site with lots of activities developed for teachers to use with students K-8. Through participation in the global schoolhouse students have an opportunity to learn about the world and communicate with children from other countries or parts of the US. www.gsn.org

Multicultural Pavilion

The Teacher's Corner is particularly useful for gaining background, conceptualizing ideas about multicultural education, developing lesson plans that integrate these ideas into various subjects, and reviews of multicultural literature suitable for students K-12. <http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/curry/centers/multicultural>

Scholastic: Where Children Love to Learn and Learn to Grow

This commercial site includes a teacher section with lesson plans, activities, lists of books, and articles that provide information on the selection of multicultural materials and issues relat-

ed to diversity in the classroom. The advantage of the site is that it can be used easily by even young children.

www.scholastic.com

Multicultural Literature Sites

Examining Multicultural Picture Books for the Early Childhood Classroom: Possibilities and Pitfalls

by Jean Mendoza & Debbie Reese

This article provides information about the importance of multicultural literature in developing aesthetic and psychosocial values. The authors also present suggestions for selection of multicultural materials and offer concrete examples to illustrate their points.

<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n2/mendoza.html>

Children's Multicultural Literary Resources: Brown Like Me

The site was developed by a mother for her daughter and other children like her so that they would be able to read and enjoy literature about children who looked like them. This site would be appropriate for both teachers and parents who are interested in providing a broad spectrum of literature for their children.

<http://members.aol.com/mcsing29/index.htm>

Cynthia Leitch Smith: Children's Literature Resources

This site not only has a wealth of resources but is very colorful and fun to use. Cynthia Leitch Smith is an author of children's books (*Indian Shoes*, *Jingle Dancer*, and *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*) who has used her knowledge of writing and cultural background to create quality literature and a Web site that brings in other authors, other cultures, and other thinking.

www.cynthialeitchsmith.com

Fifty Multicultural Books Every Child Should Know

The CCBC has put together a multicultural book list that includes titles for preschool through grade 3. Each selection identifies the ethnic groups portrayed in the text.

www.soemadison.wisc.edu/ccbc/50mult.htm#repro

Happily Ever After

Presents many versions of the fairy tale, *Cinderella*. A thematic unit, the multicultural Cinderella, is an interesting way to integrate various cultures into a primary classroom.

www.hehd.clemson.edu/CurrInst/Kaminski/indexK.htm

Multicultural Book Reviews

This site is very useful for both parents and educators although the introduction identifies teachers as the primary audience. The information is provided by site users but there is already a substantial list of literature for all ages. Currently, the categories include African American, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latino-Latina, Native American, Alaska Native, Middle Eastern, East Indian, textbooks, and multiple ethnicities. There were many books listed for children pre-K-4 in all categories.

<http://www.isomedia.com/homes/jmele/homepage.html>

Story Arts

Created and maintained by Heather Forest, author and storyteller, the material is oriented to teachers but parents will enjoy the storytelling selections and ideas for helping kids to be effective storytellers. The creator of the site has selected many delightful tales from different cultures that she has retold for English-speaking children.

www.storyarts.org

Vandergrift's Children's Literature Page

"An acquaintance with and understanding of literacy characteristics is one of the first ways a young child has of making sense of what it is to be human," begins the description of this site from Rutgers, the State University of New York. On this comprehensive site, you will find information on cookbooks; sharing literature; fairy tales; author biographies; African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and Native American literature; American history; female stories; and much more.
www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/index.html

Specific Cultures

American Indian and Alaska Native Sites

Oyate

Oyate, the Dakota word for people, is a Native organization "working to see that our lives and our stories are portrayed honestly, and so that all people will know our stories belong to us." This site includes bibliographies of books by and about Native Americans and Alaska Natives that are appropriate for children and young adults. Each review includes bibliographic data, a summary of the story, and recommendations for the age and grade level of the reader. Also on the site is a list of books that have been written about Native American culture and history that Oyate considers to be offensive, inaccurate, or both. Books for young children include picture books, books without words, and chapter books.
www.oyate.org/aboutus.html

Alaska Native Knowledge Network

This site is a terrific resource for educators in the Northwest Region and beyond. There are four major headings that can be used to navi-

gate the site: Native Pathways to Education, Alaska Native Center Cultural Resources, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and Indigenous Education Worldwide. The downloadable Culturally Responsive Science Curriculum, while specific to Alaska Native towns and villages, is generalizable to many other geographic areas. All instructional plans are divided by grade level: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Plans include standards for subject matter, Alaska cultural standards, materials and media, objectives, and teacher and student references.
www.ankn.uaf.edu

Native American Indian Resources

This site contains more than 300 pages of resources for educators and parents of children, K-12. Resources include maps, Native stories, art, astronomy, food, health, and book reviews. The book reviews are not only rated on the quality of the writing but the accurate portrayal of Native American peoples. In addition to bibliographic data, reviewers summarize the story so that readers can get the flavor of the text and identify the grade or age level for which the book is recommended.
www.kstrom.net/isk/mainmenu.html#top

Indigenous Australia

This site explores the dreaming or dream time stories of Australian aboriginal people. The 20 stories are listed along with the title and narrator. There is a glossary that goes along with each story to assist in pronunciation of the indigenous language used. Quicktime is necessary to use the audio and video aspects of the site. Young children will enjoy both listening and viewing narrators as they offer their people's sacred stories to explain how the world and all life came to be.
www.dreamtime.net.au/dreaming/index.htm

Latino Children's Books

Bibliotecas Para La Gente: The Northern California Chapter of REFORMA, National Organization to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking

The two areas that will be of interest to both parents and teachers are the Book Reviews and the Story Time Ideas. The latter are ideas connected to books for Spanish-speaking preschool and primary children. The Book Reviews contain several age and language categories. Users can click on the titles and get complete information on the book. The review also indicates if the text is Spanish, English, or both.

<http://clnet.ucr.edu/library/bplg>

Annotated Bibliography of Children's Literature Focusing on Latino People, History, and Culture

This site offers an annotated bibliography of children's literature focusing on Latino people, history, and culture, fiction and non-fiction, with additional resources for teachers and librarians.

There are two main sections. The first section lists resources, in the form of bibliographies, for librarians, teachers, and parents. The second section lists actual literature for children.

It is divided into picture books, fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. The nonfiction list includes bibliographies, reference books, and histories.

http://latino.sscnet.ucla.edu/Latino_Bibliography.html

Barahona Center

This Web site provides information, including annotated bibliographies in both Spanish and English, about recommended books in Spanish for children and adolescents, published around the world. More than 6,000 books are in the database, selected because of their quality of art and writing, presentation of material, and appeal to the intended audience.

www.csusm.edu/csb/intro_eng.html

Muslim Children's Books

Muslim Family Web Site

The mission of the Muslim Family Web site is to help promote good quality Islamic books, primarily by Muslim authors. The site includes annotated lists of books categorized for pre-K and kindergarten, lower elementary, upper elementary, and junior high and up.

<http://azkiah.tripod.com/Children'scatalog.htm>

The World of Arab and Muslim Children in Children's Books

This site provides annotated book lists—fiction, nonfiction, and folklore—for younger and older children. Books represent a wide range of Arab countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Pakistan, and Algeria. In addition, resources for books about Arab and Muslim cultures are listed.

<http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/academic/education/eflt/lechner/arabbooks.pdf>

Asian American Children's Books

Powerful Asian American Images Revealed in Picture Books

Asian Americans have been concerned with the absence of realistic images of their lives and contributions to American culture. This list provides teachers and parents with picture books that depict Asian Americans accurately.

www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/asian.html

The New York Public Library: "On Lion" for Kids—Celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

The particular focus of the site at this time period is the celebration of Asian and Pacific peoples. There are lists of books and stories for young readers that include the title and a brief summary of the topic of the story.

www.nypl.org/branch/kids/asian/asian.html

African American Web Sites

African American Bibliography: Books for Children

Part of the Internet School Library Media Center

(<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/index.html>), this site provides selected annotated bibliographies of books that deal with the black experience. Most annotations are reprinted from the Library of Congress. Categories of bibliographies include folktales, biography, general nonfiction, poetry, drama, and socially and culturally conscious fiction.

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/mulafro.htm>

Powerful African American Images Revealed in Picture Books

In the introduction to this site, which is part of the Vandergrift's Children's Literature page (www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/index.html), Vandergrift writes:

All children deserve to see positive images of children like themselves in the books they read. For the youngest children who "read" pictures as adults share text, illustrations can have a powerful influence on their perceptions of the world. Strong visual images of those similar to themselves, their friends, and their families are life-affirming and can encourage children to reach beyond the boundaries of their immediate life experiences and consider a multitude of possibilities for their futures.

The books listed on this site represent a sampling of picture books that provide realistic positive images of African American children. www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/afro.html

Russian Children's Books

The books listed on this site have previously been available only in Russian. Printed in Moscow and carefully translated into English by native speakers, they "feature the best nursery rhymes, folk tales, and classics written and illustrated especially for children" by such notable authors as Tolstoy and Chekhov. www.natashascafe.com/html/book.html

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Focusing on priority educational needs in the region, NWREL conducts 11 programs in research and development, training, and technical assistance.

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